

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.

—Rom. 14,9 (ESV)



In your heart enthrone Him;
There let Him subdue
All that is not holy,
All that is not true:
Crown Him as your captain
In temptation's hour;
Let His will unfold you
In its light and power.

At the Name of Jesus (LSB 512)
stz. 5

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Alles vermag ich durch ihn, der mir Kraft gibt (Lutherbibel 1984).

I can do everything through Him who gives me power (personal translation).

—Phil. 4,13

Or, squeezing the original Greek with a little more force: “I am competent to accomplish all things through the One who causes me to be able to function”.

I sense that, while we often hear St. Paul through encounter with his writings, in reality, we do not *learn* from him—to our shame, to our misfortune, and even to our peril. I fear that this is so because we daily imbibe from the cocktail of popular Christian piety run amuck mixed with an inordinate occupation with the avocational/recreational/leisure-laden-activity-of-your-choice, and we're too inebriated to receive St. Paul's words as he gives them—which is to say, as Christ Jesus gives them. We can't hear these words except as sage-like abstractions clamoring to eventually serve as motivational pep-talk for the next regularly-scheduled extra-curricular expression of youth culture, or as a distraction or delay from the inevitable “bottoming out” that truly *needs* to happen if any health is to emerge from a catastrophic situation. As a result, what St. Paul is ultimately getting at perpetually eludes us.

Thank God for “hunger”, for “being in need”. Those are the opportunities that sober you up and let you in on a little secret. Life is not an activity—vocational or otherwise; it is a person, Christ Jesus Himself, who has both appeased an angry God and brings balm and healing to a broken world in His suffering and death and to us through special means. He has truly made us free, enslaved to no one and nothing. As such, life—vocational or otherwise—is filled by Christ Jesus with contentment, in every circumstance. Thus, thank God also for “plenty” and “abundance.”

In all things, Christ Jesus is there, and thus contentment is there—to our glorification, to our honor, to the final redemption of our bodies.

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

—2 Corinthians 9,8 (ESV)



Helene Ruth

On 23 March we welcomed our daughter, Helene (pronounced “Heh-LEY-neh”) Ruth, into the world outside the womb via a scheduled caesarian delivery. Everything went very smoothly. Unlike our previous two births with Thomas and Matthias in the context of gestational diabetes, which were then quickly resolved, there were no complications this time, thanks be to God. Elizabeth and I stand very pleased both with the medical care and attention that both she and Helene received in the hospital, as well as with the ongoing Midwife care in our apartment that is standard practice in Germany. Also, we are thankful that the hospital was happily willing to make an exception to near-universal practice in Germany and work with our American-based health insurance in processing payment for medical services.

Most recently, on 12 April, God welcomed Helene into his family in Christ Jesus through Holy Baptism. As was the case with our sons, I baptized Helene. It was a truly joyous occasion.

Helene is a markedly content baby, spending the vast majority of her day sleeping. Falling into a regular nursing routine occurred instantly for her. She enjoys the new girl clothes that we’ve recently purchased for her, the awake time that she can spend with her brothers, and occasional rides in her stroller.

Elizabeth is currently enjoying her maternity leave, which extends to the latter-half of May. Of course, all of us are thankful for and enjoying Elizabeth’s mother’s presence among us. Through her invaluable assistance and efforts, she has made this important time an enjoyable time for all of us. And, of course, she has enjoyed her time spent with her new granddaughter. We look forward to my parents coming later this Summer!

Aside from caring for Helene and enjoying her company on a daily basis, what remains is to facilitate both her German residence documentation here in Leipzig and then her US citizenship, Social Security, and official documentation through the US Embassy in Berlin, all for which appointments are scheduled and paperwork completed.

Lukaskirche

After essentially at least two years of negotiation with *Landeskirche* officials for the use of *Lukaskirche* as not only the new site for our Leipzig congregational life but also the site for various outreach initiatives, on Easter Monday, 6 April, we held our inaugural festival Divine Service to begin this new phrase. It truly was a memorable liturgy and overall event—replete with many new faces from near and far amidst the approximate 400 people in attendance; the Ordination of our vicar, Thomas Beneke; and a stellar musical array and expression, including a 20-person brass ensemble. It truly was a fantastic start to this new stage of our life and work.

That being said, there was for us a bittersweet aspect to the day, as we also bid farewell to our vicar and his wife and their daughter. Thomas departed the following day for their native South Africa to receive their belongings in their new hometown, where he is now serving as pastor of a Lutheran church.





Let Us Pray . . .

- In gratitude for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, and for the eternal hope that it brings to us
- In gratitude for God's provision for our everyday life and for the advancement of the Gospel and the work of the Church
- In gratitude for Helene, for a smooth delivery, and for good health for mother and child
- In gratitude for *Lukaskirche* and the advantages it brings for our life and work in Leipzig in the name of Jesus
- In gratitude for upright family members, upright rulers, and faithful friends and neighbors



Lukaskirche, Leipzig, Germany
(Photo: Rick Steenbock, LCMS Eurasia)

Eurasia Blog Highlights

Please check out the Easter 2015 *Season in Song* Series, and many other devotional and news items:

<http://eurasiablog.lcms.org/>

While we will miss the Benekes greatly, we are glad that they can begin their own new stage of life and service in their home country, and that we can remain in touch with them, thanks to modern communication channels. Additionally, we're proud that, in this special way, our Leipzig congregation can serve not only as a "receiving church" (of new Christians, of support for work, and so on) but also as a "sending church" to other parts of the world.

The tasks now include 1) taking the time to "find our way" as a congregation in a "new" environment, and adapt to the circumstances, 2) continuing to foster the processes of renovation of building and organ, 3) seeing through the current aggressive outreach initiatives planned and being carried out, and 4) engaging in planning for additional initiatives in the near and more-distant future. I'm happy to report that the organ is soon set (most likely as early as this coming June) to receive a full-scale professional renovation at a very favorable price. Hopefully, in a little more than one year from now, I will be able to share very good news on that front month after month of all the good things coming people's way in Leipzig in the name of Christ Jesus.

Die Arbeit in Mittel- und Ost-Europa

Work continues, of course, on fronts outside of Leipzig. Future trips to Russia are planned and being planned, for which I am currently preparing. Committee work on the Wittenberg Project continues. Musical preparation for the Dedication of the Old Latin School in Wittenberg is at hand (I'm serving as organist for the Dedication service in the *Stadtkirche* in Wittenberg, and performing as organist and singer in the Dedication concert). A lecture for a touring group to Leipzig on Bach and Mendelssohn and the Christian faith will occur near the beginning of Summer. It will be a happily frenetic few months!

Die Brüder

Aside from falling prey to sicknesses making the Leipzig rounds, Thomas and Matthias are doing swimmingly. Thomas had his 7th birthday party early (his birthday is 18 April), inviting several of his precocious classmates on a tour of medieval Leipzig, which Daddy hosted. Matthias continues to enjoy his playtime, and is learning to be "gentle" around Helene, which is improving.

May God in Christ through the Spirit bless you now and forever.

Christopher & Elizabeth

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Helene Ruth Photos



Lukaskirche Photos (courtesy of Rick Steenbock, LCMS Eurasia)

