

Hildesheim Mail

Greetings from rainy Hildesheim!

In September we enjoyed a visit from a good friend who lives in Littleton. He was in Europe on a business trip and spent the weekend with us. On Sunday morning after our service we were talking in the kitchen and he said, obviously moved, it's (the church) just like a big family!!! I have thought of his comment many times, and I would have to agree, God has done it again!! I am smiling as I write this thinking of some of the different aspects of "family". For example, the parents are the ones that add to the family. In this case our heavenly Father. Or, some of our siblings are more of a challenge than others. None the less, they are still our siblings. And, some times we enjoy harmony in the family and sometime it is just plain work!!

This time of year can be challenging in Germany. Many people experience a "down" after the holidays. It doesn't help that the sun is shy, often hiding behind layers of gray clouds, leaving it cold and dark. We have found that this is a great time for a ladies breakfast. It gives the women in the church something positive to look forward to as well as work for, and it helps all of us to refocus on what's truly important. On January 15th, Ulrike Degen from Hamburg spoke to us about our true source of happiness. We were a great group – over 30 ladies, a record – and it was a very encouraging morning together.



Among the guests were two friends of Moni Ingelmann, a long time member of the church here. She had met one of them at a water aerobics class, and the other is a friend from work. Moni has had the chance to talk to both of them about her faith, and she shares with us her excitement about how they are opening up to the idea of really being able to have a relationship with God, as well as belonging to a group of people with whom they can openly talk about their faith. Both of these are very different concepts than what they have experienced in the State church. Moni shared just last week in the Bible study about the man that opened her eyes to this very new (for her) concept. It's really wonderful to get to watch her do the same for others.



Another guest was a friend of Susan Bratcher (our co-worker) who has been coming to the ladies class as well as some of the special activities for well over a year now. When she started coming it was because of the friendship, she was very leery of the anything that had to do with God! She couldn't imagine how learning about God could be interesting, let alone necessary. Just last week Susan told me that her friend was struggling with something and chose to sit down and read in her bible. To her astonishment it helped her.

Then there is Samira. We've mentioned her before. She's been coming since August. Samira's family comes from Albania, part of a gypsy people and also Moslem, but she grew up in Germany. Even though she was raised here she did not learn to read. It is simply not a priority for a girl to learn to read in many Moslem homes. Her family "married" her off at 15. She has 4 children between 5 and 12 years old. When her husband didn't want her around anymore, he kicked her out and terrorized her until she let him have the children. Romani, whom we've mentioned before, met her shortly after that time, and a few months



later he brought her to church. It has been neat to see the church take both of them in, even though there are some very huge cultural differences, among other things. My heart goes out to her. She has had such hardship, and all simply because she's a woman.

Each of these women represents for me a different aspect of family. Whether it's the week in, week out investment over the years of helping someone come to know God, and be able to pass on what they know to another. Or getting to watch people come to know a Father they never even knew was there, at least not for them. Or being stretched and challenged because of something that is so new and different to the usual, as we are confronted with a brother or sister very different from ourselves.

There have been times in the work here in Hildesheim that I have been frustrated and wondered just what God was doing. Now is not one of them!! There is no place on this earth I would rather be than walking beside the brothers and sisters He has blessed us with, and growing in Him as we help others grow. Our God is a great God.

Cindy