



Siegelbach, Germany  
January 31, 2026

Dear friends,

Shortly after sending out the last newsletter, I drove up to Frankfurt to pick up a dear friend from seminary, Rev. Joe McCalley, who would be filling in for me for our “long November” back in the United States (long because it went from the end of October to the beginning of December, though it flew by for us). Pastor McCalley and I have known each other for more than a decade. During the Covid spring of 2020, we were stuck on campus in Fort Wayne with two German exchange students. Markus is now one of my members and Samuel will be moving here soon. Pastor McCalley came to Germany for Samuel’s wedding last year and got to know our congregation pretty well. I knew the congregation would be in good hands! Pastor McCalley returned to Germany at the beginning of January with a tour group from his church, Trinity in Columbia, Missouri.

We landed in Newark, New Jersey on October 30th, picked up the rental car, and stayed the night with my Uncle Glen and Aunt Sara in northern New Jersey. What a treat to be back in the United States! I really got a sense of “home” while driving through the small New Jersey towns and enjoying the New England fall colors. On Reformation Day/Halloween, we drove across the Tappen Zee to Sleepy Hollow. It was a special treat to be able to go to Sleepy Hollow on Halloween and read Washington Irving’s *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* on the way. There was something about being away from the U.S. for so long and then coming back and enjoying the sense of “Americana.” We met up with another dear friend, Pastor Stefan Gramanz (who visited us in July) to go to a jack-o’-lantern festival in Croton-on-Hudson, followed by a late dinner at a diner. Pastor Gramanz’s parsonage in Pawling, New York would be our base of operations for a few days.

From Pawling we drove towards New York City and stopped at West Point for a tour of the U.S. Military Academy. In New York City we stayed two nights with Pastor Sachs in the parsonage of Zion German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brooklyn Heights. I visited this congregation regularly since 2012 and spent my last Christmas in the United States preaching there in German and English. It was great to be among old friends and introduce Emma and the girls to New York City. On that Sunday I preached in German and then presented on our work in Kaiserslautern.

From there we returned to Pawling, where I presented to a group from the congregation. We also took a day to visit one of our dear supporting congregations, Faith in Groton, Connecticut. We decided to go a bit out of the way and tour Rhode Island a bit and then I presented at Groton that night after a delicious potluck meal. It was really great to finally meet our point of contact in Groton, Paul Strawderman. Several members had been stationed in Germany and many had connections to the local submarine industry, which was pretty exciting. We enjoyed visiting the Revolutionary War battlefield in Groton as well, where Benedict Arnold returned to the colonies to attack his own countrymen (he was a native of Connecticut).

From Pawling we drove to Westminster, Massachusetts, visiting the Mark Twain home in Hartford, Connecticut on the way. We stayed with Pastor Peter Gregory and family. Some of our members from a few years ago—the Youngs—are from Westminster and still have family at the congregation. The Assistant

Regional Business Manager for LCMS Eurasia—Michael and Nancy Morizio—are also from there. And Dr. Jason Lane, the pastor who married me and Emma, is a son of the congregation. Dr. Lane's wife grew up at the parsonage when her dad was pastor there and then we were able to stay in the same parsonage. It was great meeting Dr. Lane's family in the congregation when I presented that evening. We are also so thankful to the Gregorys for sending us along with some winter coats for the girls. We didn't realize how cold it would be on the first leg of our trip!

From Westminster we drove to Boston, with a stop at Walden Pond and Lexington and Concord on the way. In Boston, we were welcomed to the home of a hospitable Lutheran family, with connections to upstate New York and southern Illinois. Our accommodations were nicer than any Airbnb and gave us the chance to make some new dear Lutheran friends. A friend from seminary, Miguel Barcelos, is originally from the Azores and is now one of the pastors at First Lutheran in Boston. When I studied in Germany and spent my vicarage year here, I visited Miguel in the Azores and in Lisbon. Now I was able to see him in Boston. Of course, we had to hike the "freedom trail" as well. Altogether we had a great mix of presenting at congregations and visiting historical sites whenever we had a chance.

From Boston we drove up to Maine to visit Emma's great aunt and uncle. We stayed on the Canadian side of the border and then drove along the St. Lawrence river and down into Vermont on our way to Pennsylvania. Of course, we ran into a real snowstorm while driving the Trans-Canada highway and the thought struck me that I didn't know whether or not I could take the rental car out of the country. Avis knew I would be going from Newark to St. Louis, but our Canadian excursion was more of a last minute plan. The thought wouldn't leave my head as we saw semi-trucks flipped over, trailers fishtailing, and cars in the ditch. Thankfully the Lord's angels guided us safely to our next stop!

From Vermont we drove down past Fort Ticonderoga to Lititz, Pennsylvania, where we stayed a few nights with Pastor Seifferlein and family, whom Emma knew from her Wisconsin days when Pastor Seifferlein was at Emmanuel in Adell, Wisconsin. We made it in just enough time to attend the midweek Divine Service and then present on our work. I wasn't expecting much from a midweek service, so I was surprised to see about 50 or more people there and receive a warm and excited welcome. Lititz and the entire Lancaster area put us right in the heart of Pennsylvania Dutch territory, so I touched on early German Lutheran connections in that area.

The next day, Pastor Seifferlein took me to the nursing home to visit with a 101 year old German-American and his beautiful 100 year old wife. Ernie comes from Ottobeuren, a small town near Memmingen in southern Germany where I once visited with a good friend, Pastor Marc Haessig. Ernie was a German soldier in World War II, captured in Italy and brought as a P.O.W. to Pennsylvania. He loved the area so much he decided to immigrate after the war. It was an honor to speak with Ernie in German, and to say the Words of Institution and the Aaronic benediction in German over Ernie and his family.

Emma and I enjoyed walking the town of Lititz, getting some of the best pretzels we've ever had, and then visiting the grave of Dick Winter (Band of Brothers) and the Ephratha cloister, a German religious community founded in 1732. There I chatted with some men in German. They could understand my High German but not speak it. I could understand their Pennsylvania Dutch but not speak it. Together we could make it work.

From Lititz we drove down through Delaware and over the Chesapeake Bay through Annapolis and Washington D.C. to Vienna, Virginia, where we stayed with Nancy Nus, the mother of one of Emma's dear friends from college, Kirsten (both visited us in Germany a few years ago). Kirsten drove all the way out from Fort Wayne to visit us. Besides catching up with dear friends, it was helpful presenting at a congregation with many military connections and whose Pastor, Rev. James Douthwaite, serves on the Board

for International Mission. The congregation's name is St. Athanasius, which tied in great with my presentation, where I speak about taking our Board of Elders on retreats to Trier, Germany, where St. Athanasius was exiled in the AD 300s.

From Vienna, we drove to North Carolina (stopping to see Jamestown and Yorktown on the way) to stay with the Johnson family, who are dear friends of mine from high school and church in St. Louis. We relaxed with the Johnsons that evening and then drove farther south, to the Fayetteville area, where we spent a few days with the Swenson family. Hannah Swenson and Emma were good friends from college at Concordia Wisconsin. The LORD had everything planned out great when we moved to Germany in October 2021 because the Swensons moved to Wiesbaden, Germany just the month before, where Anthony was stationed with the Army. We are godparents of James Swenson and the Swensons are godparents of our Cecilia. They moved to North Carolina back in April. Having this visit to look forward made their departure from KELC a bit more bearable.

From North Carolina we drove across South Carolina to visit my great Aunt Ruth in North Augusta. Of course, when leaving older relatives the thought always crosses my mind that we might not see each other again until eternity. However, Aunt Ruth surprised us a few weeks later by coming with my mom's cousin Carol to St. Louis for an open house we had there! Visiting family was the third piece of our trip that made it so beautiful: presenting on our work to our supporters, visiting historical sites, and seeing family.

Then we drove across Georgia. The temperature was 82°F, much different than Canada. And of all the driving, Atlanta was by far the worst. I was most scared of driving in New York City, but that was no problem. Then there was the fear of deer and moose in Maine, but we got through it. The snowstorm was white-knuckle driving. But Atlanta outdid everything else! I wasn't quite sure what anyone around me was doing. We drove through one corner of Alabama to enjoy the scenery and so Emma could say she went there. We finished the day in Nashville, Tennessee, staying with our good friend Matthew Carver. We enjoyed dinner with the Carver family and then stayed up late into the night discussing church matters, just like Matthew and I would do at conferences in Fort Wayne.

The next day, we drove up to the Louisville, Kentucky area, where we stayed with friends from Germany, Dru and Cathy Martin. They had our mutual friends and former congregation members from Kaiserslautern, Stephen and Stephanie Guzik, as well as Pastor Lackey and his wife, Molly, over for lunch. Stephanie was at KELC when I was a vicar. Just as my vicarage was wrapping up, she went on a cruise and met Stephen. They got married, he moved to Germany, and then went through catechesis with my predecessor Pastor Asher. By the time I arrived, Stephen had taken on several leadership positions at church. The Lord awakened in him a desire to study for the ministry. Stephanie then gave up her stable job teaching at Ramstein and took a job at Fort Knox so Stephen could attend Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. I presented at his fieldwork congregation in Vine Grove, Kentucky that Sunday. It was delightful to share the story of Stephen and Stephanie with the congregation since they were a key part of my larger presentation, illustrating how our mission congregation overseas is able to raise up future church workers. I was also struck by the number of Germans near Fort Knox, many of whom are widows of U.S. military. I think I spoke more German in Vine Grove, Kentucky than anywhere else on our trip, including at the German church in New York and among the Pennsylvania Dutch.

From Kentucky we drove to northern Illinois to meet up with Emma's family, who had just moved back to the U.S. from South Africa. Emma's grandparents came up from Arizona and her uncle is a WELS pastor in the area, so we spent the time visiting with them. We also made a quick trip across the border to Racine, Wisconsin, to visit the Ottens. Luke was an exchange student at Oberursel our first year in Germany. He now serves as pastor of two congregations in Racine. Luke and Ehryn's son, Wilhelm, is also our godson and our Agatha is their goddaughter.

From the Chicago area we drove to St. Louis, but first a stop in Normal, Illinois for lunch and a presentation at Christ Lutheran Church. That's where member Paul Hester grew up. Paul's mom and dad, Norman and Elaine Hester, organized the lunch. Grandma and Grandpa Hester come to visit Germany every year, so we've really gotten to know them. How great to see them in their native habitat! It also led me to approach my presentation a bit differently knowing that congregations like ours supporting military members overseas would not be possible without the sons and daughters of these congregations in the U.S. coming over here with the military. Christ Lutheran is also one of our major supporting congregations, so it was an honor to personally bring greetings from KELC. Grandma and Grandpa Hester would be with us in Germany just a few weeks later for Christmas and for the confirmation of their grandson, James Hester.

Finally we ended up in my hometown of St. Louis. We were on the road for weeks, seemingly without a destination. And then the driving came to an end. The day after returning to St. Louis was a momentous day for me. I buried my Grandpa Jensen at Jefferson Barracks cemetery that afternoon, which was quite emotional. That evening, I baptized my nephew, Meyer Jensen, at the Thanksgiving Eve service at Abiding Savior. In one day, I was able to witness within my own family the cycle of life and the LORD's promise of eternal life in Baptism, and then the end of that baptismal life in Christian burial, or rather, the continuation of that baptismal life in eternity as we await the resurrection of the dead.

Most of our time in St. Louis was spent visiting with family. How wonderful to be back at Grandma Hick's house for Thanksgiving, just like growing up! A dear friend and former member of KELC, Mason Westphal, drove up from Arkansas to visit with us for a few days. Mason separated from the Air Force in October. He will begin his studies at the Fort Wayne seminary this June. Another son of KELC training to be a pastor! A highlight of our time in St. Louis was presenting at my home church, Peace Lutheran, and then celebrating with friends and family at an open house hosted by my mother that afternoon. We also spent some time at the seminary in St. Louis, visiting Grandma Hick and Grandma Jensen, as well as other family. Of course, with only one week in St. Louis and all the visits to make, it ended up being the busiest part of our trip.

Although it was hard to say goodbye, it was also good to finally come home to Kaiserslautern at the beginning of December, especially with all the Christmas decorations up and Advent well underway. We cut down a Christmas tree on December 6th and began all the planning necessary for Advent and Christmas, as well as preparations for the inbound vicar from the Fort Wayne seminary, Peter Williams. With contacts at St. Michaelis, our SELK host congregation in Kaiserslautern, we were able to get Vicar Williams an apartment just a 5 minute walk from church and a 10 minute walk from the train station. He will spend two weekends per month helping with a congregation of our French partner church in Paris, so he will take the high speed train from Kaiserslautern (only a 2.5 hour journey!)

After Christmas, we had some German friends stay with us through the New Year. That week between Christmas and New Year is one of my favorite weeks of the year because it feels like time doesn't exist. We had a number of church services and otherwise just had friends from church over to eat, play games, and enjoy each other's company. It felt like being on school break. Overall it was a delightful Christmas!

We installed the new vicar at our Epiphany service on January 6th. Vicar Williams got to work right away filling in for me at Bible Study as I had to preach at Trinity, Frankfurt. The vicar has had several opportunities to preach at various midweek services, as have our German vicars. We will meet up again soon for our regular "preaching workshop" to discuss with each other how we can better our preaching. The vicar is also assisting with our weekly Latin instruction for homeschool students in the congregation and he is able to attend everything at church while he is in town. He also joined me one Tuesday at the military prison in Sembach just to see what the work is like there.

Speaking of the prison, at the end of December we had one of those moments that makes all the work here worthwhile. One of the prisoners has been here for over 9 months now. We've talked any number of times about Baptism since he was never baptized. Some of the other prisoners were asking questions about the differences between denominations and we were discussing Baptism when this longer term prisoner came in late. He asked right away: "When can I get baptized?" We went over the basics again and I noted how this prisoner has come to my Bible Study every week since the beginning and had become serious about Lutheran doctrine. We read the account of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch from Acts 8 and I said: "There's water in the coffee maker. So what prevents Baptism right now?" This prisoner wanted Baptism so I baptized him right there and then recorded it in our church book.

Interestingly, this same prisoner's girlfriend came up from Italy to visit. I told him he should tell her about our church, which he did. She showed up and was excited to meet the congregation and join us for worship. She came up again just a few weeks ago and told me she is interested in learning more about becoming Lutheran. I put her in contact with our missionary in the Vicenza/Aviano, Italy area, Jason Steffenson, and student of theology Luiz Lange. When I went to the prison last week, the prisoner I baptized said: "Well, it looks like we'll be Lutheran now because my girlfriend really likes your church." This same prisoner uses a Lutheran Study Bible he found (paperback) that must go back to Pastor Asher's days at the prison, and he has gotten a number of other prisoners into reading Portals of Prayer, provided for us by Carolyn Brinkley of the Military Project out of the Fort Wayne seminary. The fruit of these past few years of work and the dedication of so many faithful donors in the United States all became so clear to me in just this one case and has really reignited a passion in me for the everyday work of a pastor on the ground.

Back in July, I was asked by students at the SELK seminary in Oberursel to present on the *Brief Statement*, Gospel Reductionism, and Seminex at their biannual "Studentenkonvent" (meeting of students) in January. I researched quite a bit throughout the fall and then intensively wrote my paper in the first few weeks of January. I was asked to present for three hours, which is three times longer than I have ever presented before. It was quite the experience! I also learned quite a bit along the way and had a great time sharing with the students all I discovered. The issues faced in our history have so much to teach us about the battles being fought today.

Just like our last network support tour of the United States, our November 2025 tour allowed time to reflect on the work of KELC, both within the congregation and throughout Germany and Europe. A big part of my presentation was about our proposal to replicate the work in Kaiserslautern at other military installations throughout Germany and Europe. This has already brought a missionary to the Vicenza area in Italy. And Pastor Domenichelli was here for a year to get the work in Spangdahlem off the ground. I took over for the house church in July. We kept meeting in the home until our return from the United States in December. In the meantime, I worked with the chaplains at Spangdahlem to get permission to hold a weekly service on the Air Base. We learned quickly that there is no real way to get the word out that we exist without some kind of presence on the Air Base. So starting on the Third Sunday in Advent, we have been holding weekly services in the chapel on Spangdahlem Air Base. In less than two months we have had several new people show up, including three fighter pilots. Every Sunday I drive the 1.5 hour drive with one or more of our vicars and other friends from Kaiserslautern to Spangdahlem, where we have catechesis at 3:30pm, Divine Service at 5pm, and Bible Study at 6:15pm.

I have also been in contact with several LCMS Lutherans near Grafenwöhr, in northern Bavaria. We have several members moving there in the next year, along with a family from Italy within the next two years. These are all in addition to the contacts there we have from the Ministry to the Armed Forces and the SELK congregation in Nürnberg. This Saturday, we will be making a trip to Grafenwöhr to hold our first service there. The goal with Grafenwöhr as with Spangdahlem is to provide services for our Lutheran soldiers and their families, reach other liturgically and biblically-minded Christians, and from there the unchurched on the

bases and in the surrounding communities. We'd like to build up these locations enough to justify bringing in more missionaries or until the arrival of LCMS chaplains to take over. Ultimately, we would like to move off-base and establish civilian parishes, which could then also support German congregations. There are no SELK congregations near Spangdahlem or Grafenwöhr, so our church planting efforts among U.S. military could very well be the start of new German congregations. We're just planting the seeds. May God give the growth!

Thank you to all our family, to all our supporters, and to all who hosted us on our trip back to the United States. Sharing about the work going on here has a way of rekindling the passion I have for what the Lord is doing here. Please continue praying especially for the church plants in Spangdahlem, and God-willing, in Grafenwöhr as well. And please pray that the Lord would strengthen us to recognize and take the opportunities He has placed before us.

Jesus be with you,

*Rev. Nathaniel Jensen*

The Jensen Family



With Pastor Sachs at Zion German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Brooklyn Heights.



The girls at Zion's Henry Street parsonage.



Presenting at Faith Lutheran in Groton, Connecticut.





With Dr. Lane's family in Westminster, Mass.



The girls at Walden Pond.



Divine Service at First Lutheran, Boston. One of the joys of the network support raising tour is the rare opportunity I have as a pastor to sit with my family during the service.



A Turkey in the crosswalk in downtown Boston.



Emma's great uncle and aunt in Maine live in an old post office, where they gather and sell antiques online. It was fascinating to learn about the history of comic strips! We also drove by Stephen King's house in Bangor.



Visiting with Ernie, the 101 year old German P.O.W. from the Second World War who decided to come back to Pennsylvania.



The girls enjoying their pretzels in Litzitz, PA.



Syrup sampling with the Seifferleins.



Visiting Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's grave in Trappe, PA. Muhlenberg is regarded as the patriarch of Lutheranism in the United States.



With Mrs. Nus in Vienna, VA.



The Swensons and the Jensens together again in NC.



With Great Aunt Ruth and Great Uncle Bob. My presentation on our work in Kaiserslautern began and ended with my great grandfather (Aunt Ruth's dad) who immigrated from Germany to the U.S. in 1925. The German-speaking Missouri Synod made sure German immigrants had a church to go to, which is one of the reasons our family became Lutheran. Now, I'm on the other side of the world making sure our Americans and other English-speakers have a church they can go to. I spent lots of time reflecting on how the LORD blesses the little things we do now to change entire families for generations to come and even for eternity. The opportunity on our trip to visit my great grandfather's two living children (Aunt Ruth and Uncle Bob) was a stark reminder of this for me after talking about their dad during my presentations.



Agatha and Wilhelm, born less than two months apart in Germany.



Lake Michigan!



With the Ledford clan in North Chicago.



With the Hesters at Christ Lutheran in Normal, IL.



Open house with the Ashers (Pastor Asher was my vicarage supervisor and predecessor at KELC) and Guziks.



Grandpa Jensen's burial in the afternoon and our godson Meyer's baptism in the evening. It was an honor to officiate at both on the same day!



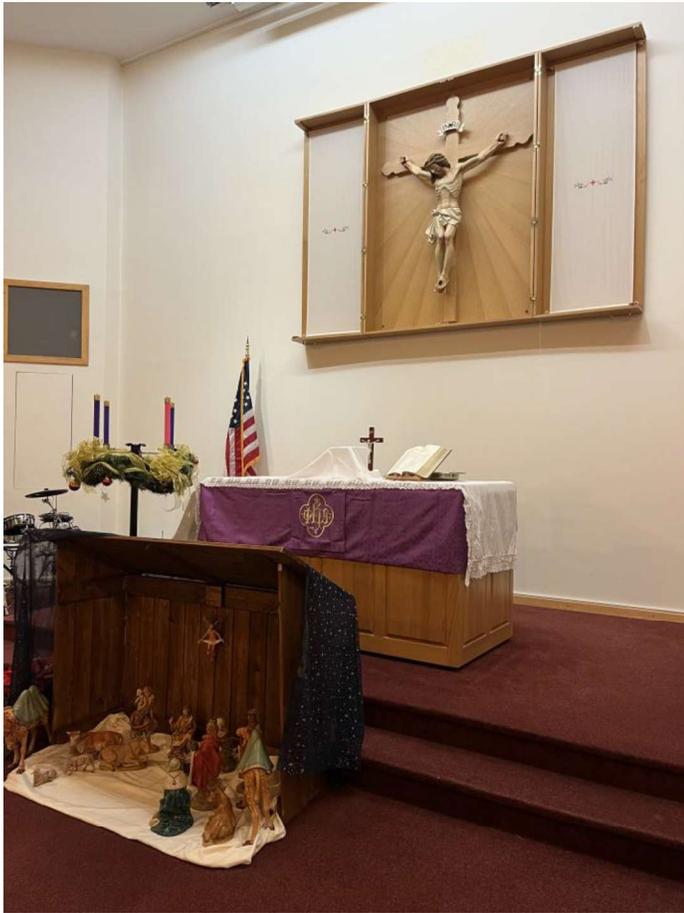
Agatha with her Great Grandma Hick and Cecilia with her Great Grandma Jensen in St. Louis.



The girls with their Grandma Abeln in St. Louis.

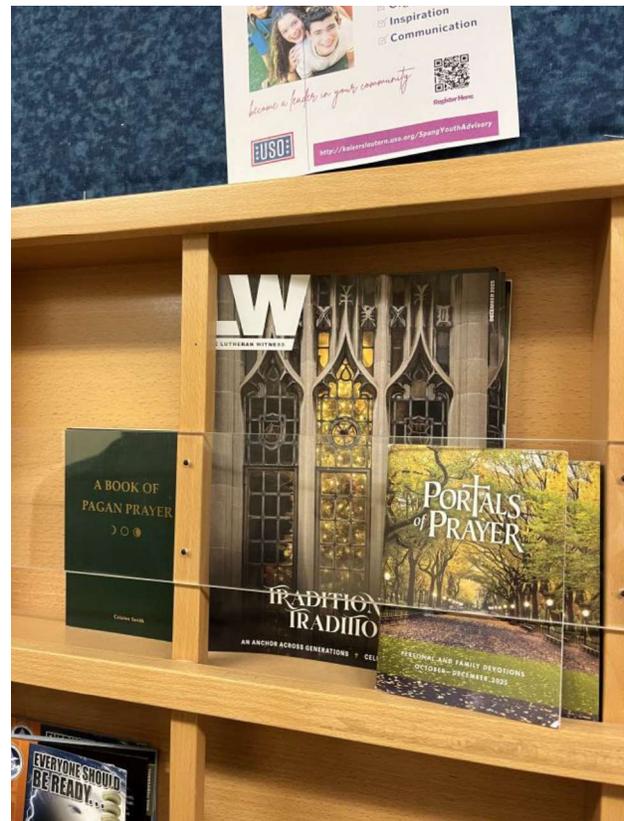


Christmas 2025 in Kaiserslautern.



Spangdahlem Evangelical Lutheran Church is now Spangdahlem Lutheran Chapel. We've moved from a house church gathering to offering weekly on-base services. Please pray that the Lord would bless this work!

Worshipping at a base chapel means we share the space with all sorts of groups.  
 Bottom Left: German vicar, Tobias Röhrs, shows the papal flag on display in the chapel.  
 Bottom Right: We pray that Portals of Prayer will counteract the Book of Pagan prayer sitting next to it. Thank you to Carolyn Brinkley and the military project for supplying us with so many resources!





Lentil/lamb stew prepared by our Persian member and enjoyed after the St. Stephen's Day service.



New Year's Eve at the Jensens.



Welcome to Vicar Peter Williams, who will split his time between Kaiserslautern and Paris for the next 1.5 years. Vicar Williams landed in Germany on Epiphany and was installed at our Epiphany service that evening.



To support the LCMS through the work of Pastor Jensen, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Jensen-Germany Support." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at [lcms.org/jensen](https://lcms.org/jensen).

You can also support the Jensen family through: MISSION CENTRAL: 40718 Highway E16, Mapleton, IA 51034-7105. Mark checks: Nathaniel Jensen #A10798-69485