



I bet some of you were wondering, *What are the Gruens doing in Germany traveling with SIX bags?* Other astute readers may be thinking to themselves, *How come no mention of God from "Day 1"? Is that omission not unusual, even troubling, for a letter posted to prayer partners and church friends?* Other friends, with critical eye, may conclude, *Have the Gruens "gone to the dogs" instead of God?*

Glad you asked . . . all good questions that deserve answers.

- **The six bags are not for us—just two are.** Four bags are for refugee kids we will be serving: decor for Thanksgiving, Christmas & Easter, arts & crafts, garlands & such. Also included are 15 of 25 Christmas stockings stuffed with goodies these boys will not have otherwise in their adopted country.
- **God is very much evident in the things we (and you!) have been praying for**, right down to the exact timing of arrivals and departures, which directions to take, which places to visit. So much is coming together, all in good time, in sync. Such coincidences are "all more than we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20), such that we must ascribe them to Providence.
- **Just as my letter from Day 1 doesn't mention God, neither does the Book of Esther mention God; nonetheless the hand of Providence is very evident in both settings.** We can read between lines scripted by God, specifically in Esther 4:14, where the father-figure in Queen Esther's life, Uncle Mordecai, points to God's purpose: "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews [*persecuted people, such as today's refugees*] will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish, and who knows but that you come to royal position for such a time as this."

I hope God will use us in Germany at such a time as this to bring relief and deliver our persecuted cousins in the faith. Today's displaced people need Mordecai-like mentors and Esther-like intercessors. *May God stay the hand of murderous kings and open doors for our refugees. May you and I be used by God as a Mordecai or Esther for such a time as this.*



Our day begins at D. Gruen & Sons Watch Museum at **Glashütte** (in Saxony, near Czech Republic), where Gruen aficionado Gerhard Bechtoldt welcomes our gift of a canvas art repro of the Gruen Watch Factory that once thrived in Cincinnati, Ohio. Later we stage another "gift of time" at the German Watch Museum across the street, where the director (*at R*) receives our gift of Fred Gruen drawings of 1892. These recently discovered initial watch prototypes were first drawn at the very watchmaker's guild where I am now sitting; this guild rightly claims my great uncle Fred as a famous alumnus from 125 years ago. Hence, I see time stands still, still marches on, and comes full circle....

Speeding to the medieval city of **Görlitz** (half in Poland), we arrive in time to see so much history and culture preserved without the bombing of WWII:



Such tourist scenes from today are in keeping with this trip being "**voluntourism**"; the real work begins Monday. God's timing & abundant provision—for health, safety, connections & good food—is evident behind these scenes. **So far, so good:**

- I find time to cut time, even 10 minutes, from my sermon, Yay! Pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts will be acceptable to God, as I preach through a translator on the meaning of Christmas—on August 1.
- I get to mentor the translator I work with—a 19-y-o convert from Islam—spending hours a day in study & friendship.
- Thirty others from all over USA & Canada join us on Sunday to form sub-teams for camp and street ministry.

Meantime, I get philosophical about God's "gift of time"—and so I pray, and ask you to join me in praying:

- That refugee boys deeply wounded by unimaginable evil & death will experience love, *with wounds healing over time.*
- Despite urgency to show love and "redeem the time" (Ephesians 5:16) that God's will be done—*all in his good time.*
- *In the fullness of time*, that God will redeem yesterday's tragedy in Hamburg, where *some 26-y-o refugee stabbed 8 Germans, killing one!* Such terrorism turns the populace against all refugees. I'm told by my host, "Germany took in too many refugees (1.1 million in 2015).... We have no idea who's who and cannot sort out the good from the bad."

How sad that refugees in Germany are held in suspicion and not integrating well—very different than in Madison. Pray we do integrate well, as we move into the refugee camps after Sunday's orientation in some big city hotel. Love & peace, Diet & Sue