

New Christians from afar worship the Savior

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“Where is the one who was born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” (Matthew 2:2)

As I waited in Europe’s largest train station for my journey back to Berlin, I saw them: refugees in Germany. The women wore head scarves and long dresses, while the men were typically garbed in Western blue jeans and light jackets. They were all looking in wonder about them at the festive Christmas lights and decorations as the snow began to fall outside.

I had just attended morning services at Trinity Lutheran in Leipzig, where Pastor Hugo Gevers had baptized 5 Iranians. In an old Gothic church from the 1890s, approximately 140 people (50 Germans, 90 Iranians and Afghans) huddled together in the cold as new members joined the worshipping community through water and the Word.

Perhaps you are aware of the decline of the Christian faith in Europe, not to mention the fading of Lutheranism in the land of the Reformation? But that is not the whole story.

Visiting Holy Trinity Lutheran in southwest Berlin on Reformation weekend, I marveled that 250 Iranians and Afghans were attending Bible classes. The Sunday service was flooded with refugees, many who have become members of Pastor Gottfried Martens’ congregation. Although all were not yet prepared to partake of Holy Communion, there were many who had been confirmed and were now part of church life. Yes, a congregation that numbered 80 in January 2013 is now pushing 800!

LHF has been working to get Luther’s Small Catechism into Farsi (the language of Iranians). The translation should be completed in 2016. What’s more, the Prayer Book/Catechism that LHF published in Dari (language of western Afghanistan/eastern Iran) needs to be reprinted. That is also on the docket for 2016, as Afghans pour into not only Germany but also Finland.

As we celebrate Epiphany, I am constantly reminded that God’s plans dwarf our feeble ideas. Over 2,000 years ago, wise men came from the east to see the King, most likely from the area we call Iran today. Today Iranians are fleeing an Islamic regime and the Savior is drawing them to Himself! In Germany! Thank you for supporting the work of LHF. May the Lord bless you and your families in 2016!