

## WFWP Stuttgart Germany praises Paul Gerhardt's words and music

Ute Lemme  
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"The Stuttgart branch of the Women's Federation for Peace held its July Thursday afternoon meeting under the title: 'go forth, my heart and seek joy in this beautiful summer time'. 14 interested participants gathered in the Stuttgart UPF center at 3pm to study the life and work of the composer of hymns and church poems, the Protestant/Lutheran theologian, Paul Gerhardt.

The meeting started with refreshments-drinks, cake, ice-cream and strawberries. After an opening prayer from Gabriele Schickert, we sang Paul Gerhardt's song: 'Geh aus mein Herz' ('go forth, my heart'), with musical accompaniment and the text projected on the big screen.

Ute Lemme introduced the life and work of Paul Gerhardt. Paul Gerhardt lived in the 17th century, from 1607 to 1679, in a time of great difficulty. The Thirty Years' War between catholic and protestant powers raged in the middle of Europe from 1618 until 1648, leaving behind a trail of devastated and depopulated cities and countryside. The people suffered from plundering, starvation, plagues of all kinds, and attacks by the military, and recovery was very slow.

At the age of 14, Paul Gerhardt was already an orphan. He financed his studies of Luther's teaching and the art of poetry at Wittenberg University by taking on a post as a tutor. From 1643 to 1651 he was a tutor in Berlin, where he engaged himself in the pastoral care of the Nikolai Church community. He composed hymns and made friends with the cantor Johann Crüger. This cantor published a song book with hymns, in which he included Paul Gerhardt's songs. In 1651 Paul Gerhardt was made the pastor in Mittenwalde (near Berlin). From 1657 until 1667 he was pastor in the Nikolai Church in Berlin. He was married in

1655, and in 12 years he and his wife had five children, of whom four died at a young age and only the youngest outlived his parents. In 1667 the first edition of Paul Gerhardt's complete songs, at that time there were 120, was published. From 1669 until his death in 1676, he was pastor of the Nikolai Church in Lübben (in Brandenburg). He was buried in the choir room of this church.

Paul Gerhardt's songs moved his contemporaries; his deep songs of faith, Christmas songs, Passion songs, songs of praise, morning and evening songs gave them comfort and hope. Many of these songs are still sung today: as choir pieces (see J. S. Bach), as songs in the protestant and catholic song books, and even as folk songs. His songs, which are interdenominational, international and held in high regard, have been translated into several languages. The Passion chorale 'O sacred heart, now wounded' (,O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden') was designated a World Heritage.

Following this, the audience had the opportunity to choose from a list of Paul Gerhardt's songs those which they wished to hear: <http://www.musicanet.org/robokopp/gerhardt.html>),

eg. Auf, auf, mein Herz, mit Freuden <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvyUEDHQfOc>

Die güldne Sonne, voll Freud und Wonne <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGuZmS8Jp0k>

Befiel du deine Wege <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ueq-D4NTGfk>

Du meine Seele singe <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjvicFMbIlg> Nun danket all' und bringet Ehr'  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANRVGsFDq8g...>

After this stimulating presentation of Paul Gerhardt's songs, we chatted together and collected ideas for our event in August. We are planning a trip to the Black Forest this summer, all are looking forward to the next event. The program ended as we took our leave of each other and offered thanks for a successful event.

Reported by Ute Lemme  
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