

Zwicksburgh – A Tale of Two Cities

Zwicksburgh, say what? Please read on to find out about the 25+yr relationship between the German *Friedenskirche* (Peace Church), an *Evangelisch-methodistische Kirche* in Zwickau, Saxony, and our *Mt. Lebanon United Methodist Church* in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We'll first learn something of Zwickau within German history, then how our two churches formed a relationship that has grown and strengthened into a beautiful friendship through the ensuing years. This article is Part 1 of a two-part submission to *The Window*. By learning more about this unique relationship, we hope to highlight the importance of continuing to uplift and support this very important partnership of our church.

History of the Area

Germany, officially the *Federal Republic of Germany*, is a country in Central Europe. It is the second-most populous country in Europe after Russia, and the most populous member of the European Union. Germany is situated between the Baltic and North seas to the north, and Alps to the south; it covers an area of 137,847sq.mi with a population of over 83 million within its 16 constituent states.

Zwickau is the fourth largest city (district) in the eastern German state of Saxony. The district has five urban units with 35 townships run by the office of a Lord Mayor. It is an area of 39.59sq.mi with a population of over 86 thousand.

The region around Zwickau was settled by Sorbs as early as the 7th century A.D., and the name is probably a Germanization of the Sorb's Slavic Sun and god of fire, Svarozic. German settlers began arriving in the 10th century with the settlement receiving a town charter in 1212. Regional mining began in 1316 and extensive mining increased with the discovery of silver in 1470. Because of these silver deposits, Zwickau developed in the 15th and 16th centuries as an important economic and cultural center of Saxony.

In 1520 Martin Luther dedicated his treatise *On the Freedom of the Christian Man* to his friend Hermann Muehlport, the Lord Mayor of Zwickau. The *Anabaptist movement* of 1525 began here under the inspiration of the *Zwickau prophets*. After Wittenberg, Zwickau became the first city in Europe to join the Lutheran Reformation. The city was seriously damaged during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) fought primarily in Central Europe and considered one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European History.

Robert Schumann, the greatest musical composer of German Romanticism, was born here in 1810. The *Robert Schumann House*, his childhood home located at the town square, is a museum and concert hall honoring both the composer and his wife, pianist Clara Wieck.

The museum also houses a research center covering a particular period of the composer's life.

In 1904 the Horch automobile plant was founded, followed by the Audi factory in 1909. In 1932 both brands were incorporated into Auto Union, but retained their independent trademarks. The Auto Union racing cars, developed by Ferdinand Porsche and Robert Eberan von Eberhorst, became well known all over the world. During WWII, the Nazi government operated a satellite camp of the Flossenburg concentration camp in Zwickau, which was sited near the Horch Auto Union camp. The Nazi administration built a prison labor camp at Osterstein Castle utilizing the plant facilities to manufacture military vehicles. Both camps were liberated by the US Army in April 1945. On August 1, 1945 military administration was handed over to the Soviet Army. The Auto Union factories of Horch and Audi were dismantled by the Soviets with the Auto Union relocated to Bavaria, evolving into the present-day Audi company. In 1948 all large companies in the area were seized by the East German government.

With the formation of East Germany, officially the *German Democratic Republic*, post-war reconstruction began. In 1958 the Horch and Audi factories were merged into the Sachsenring automotive plant where the compact Trabant cars were manufactured. The car was the first vehicle in the world to be industrially manufactured with a plastic car body. The former Sachsenring plant was acquired by Volkswagen in 1990 and has since been redeveloped as an engine and transmission manufacturing facility. Audi-AG together with the city of Zwickau operates the *August Horch Museum* in the newly-renovated former Audi works.

After the surrender of Nazi Germany in 1945, the Allied leaders divided Germany into four occupied zones and the capital city of Berlin (situated in the Soviet zone) into four sectors; US, Great Britain and French sectors formed West Berlin and the Soviet sector, East Berlin. Political rivalry in exercising overall joint authority over the country began to erode this administrative alliance. This hostility was first given the name *Cold War* in a 1945 article by George Orwell because neither the Soviet bloc countries nor the US-led Western powers officially declared war on each other. However, each clearly struggled to prevent the other from spreading its economic and political systems around the world.

Berlin was the heart of the Cold War. The *Berlin Wall*, completed by the GDR in 1961, was a guarded concrete barrier that encircled West Berlin separating it from East Berlin. The "official" purpose was to keep so-called Western "fascists" from entering East Germany and undermining the socialist state, but it primarily served the objective of stemming mass defections from East to West. Notably, the emigration of "scientists and technologists" to North America from post-war Europe was coined "brain drain" by the Royal Society

(London). By the late 1980s, the Cold War began to thaw across Eastern Europe; 1989 saw unrelenting weeks of mass protest across East Germany. On Nov 9, 1989 after a huge five-day mass protest in Berlin, crowds of Germans began dismantling the Berlin Wall, the physical barrier that symbolized the political division of the time. The political, economic and social impact of the *Fall of the Berlin Wall* further weakened the already unstable East German government. Within eleven months, the Fall triggered the reunification of Germany on Oct. 3, 1990, the subsequent dissolution of the USSR and the reshaping of Europe.

In 1873 the Peace Church of Zwickau was founded (see German name above). This small evangelical Methodist church has gathered for Sunday services for over 150 years. Through German military conflicts, two World Wars and the Soviet occupation of eastern Germany, they have continued to put their trust in the Lord. MLUMC has friends in this church and some of our church members will be visiting with them this summer.

Please join us at Faith for Today on Sun, Aug 20 as we share experiences of our visit and tell you about some of our friends in Zwickau.

Please catch Part 2 of this *Tale of Two Cities* in the next edition of *The Window*. You will learn how our two churches first connected and of our alternating visits every two years. You will also learn of the work done both here and there within this partnership.