

***One Body, Many Nations***
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Baptism is sometimes an end goal for many of the Iranians and Afghans being served at the Dresden and Chemnitz congregations. Many approach Christianity as if it is a consumable product, until the **Holy Spirit** works on their heart and they come to understand it is a **matter of faith**. For many months, the refugees have attended weekly classes in order to receive a baptismal certificate that helps them obtain asylum so that they can remain in Germany and worship without fear rather than be deported back to their politically corrupt homelands, where Christ is prohibited. We have sat in these classes, played with children, arranged and prepared lunches, provided lodging, provided Bibles and materials, prayed together, and established some relationships where the casual greetings of "**Wie gehts?**" have deepened into confiding and trusting relationships. The refugees are quite independent and can manage most things on their own, yet God through His Holy Spirit brings us together in the Body of Christ. The newly baptized are now called to be in community of the redeemed and receive the gifts of God's Word that bring life over sin that pridefully holds us captive. Meet our friend Ashkan, whom we refer to as the "Great Inviter."

**The Great Inviter - Ashkan**

When we ask congregants at Chemnitz how they come to hear about their church, there is a common response that we hear as the fingers point to Ashkan. How could such a quiet and humble servant make such a big impact? He shared that he often goes to various camps in the area to share the place to gather in Jesus' name in their native Farsi language. He says, "I am always surprised when people that I invite actually come to church. This is the power of the Holy Spirit and motivates me to continue to invite." We don't think there has ever been a time when we haven't seen Ashkan at worship; he is always serving in every way possible—preparing food when needed, caring for the altar or helping out a friend—all of this while working the night shift until 3am at a sandwich shop common in Germany called a Döner Stand. He hopes to manage his own shop someday. His bold walk in faith is not hidden anymore as it was in Iran.

Here's Ashkan's story: "I was seeking answers to many difficult questions. The Koran failed to answer my queries. While I was searching, I found Jesus in Iran through my Iranian friend, then another friend in United Arab Emirates. As I discovered Jesus and the Christian movement, I found my answers. I have shared Jesus with my friends in Iran, but many remain committed Muslims. I left Iran because, as a Christian, it became apparent that the Iranian regime was not going to tolerate Christians and therefore my life was in danger. One day, while we were in home-church

service, the police came. Fortunately, I escaped, but some of those arrested gave my name to the police, so I had to escape from Iranian Police. At the Tehran airport, I paid 5000 Euro to a man and bought a ticket to Istanbul, Turkey. Turkey requires no Visa for Iranians. From there, I travelled through a number of countries by various transport (trains, trucks, cars) to Germany in 2015. I have been a Christian for over 22 years, of which the last four have been in Germany. Since coming to the SELK Lutheran Chemnitz Refugee Church, my experience has been good in finding more Christian friends, while learning more about Jesus. The church is complete and good. Pfarrer Dittmer is always prepared and ready to welcome those seeking Christ to our church. *Since attending this church, I have invited hundreds of other refugees to our church.* Many of these same people are attending today. In our church, I feel safe and relaxed such that I can pray to our God without fear. It is very satisfying to know that I am fulfilling the “Great Commission;” bringing others to Christ.

Being away from my homeland is the most difficult part. However, I have experienced a new place and a new culture; and I am happy that I am a Christian. I thank God that He found me and helped Jesus to enter in my heart and my life. I also thank God for helping me to guide more Christians to Him.”

### **Prayers:**

- For the newly baptized to grow in faith across cultures and live the life of the baptized.
- For thanksgiving for generous accommodation from Dresden congregants.
- For our family whom we love and miss during the Holy season.
- For the birthday celebration of Carl on Good Friday when he was actually born on Good Friday in Germany.
- For our team of mission supporters that serve in joy and hope for others.

***“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”*** 1 Corinthians 12:13 ESV

Blessings, *Carl & Karen Cecil*



Chemnitz “Kaffee” Service after  
Divine Worship



Crown of Thorns  
St Petri Church, Dresden

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