

Cover -

Welcome to the Church of St. Viti Heeslingen.

(Photo of church)

“O Lord, I love the House where you live and the place where your glory dwells.”

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Dear visitors,

You are located in the oldest church between the Elbe and Weser. For about a thousand years within these walls the praise of God has been heard, people here have gained consolation, peace, forgiveness and new hope. In all the confusion, storms of the time and all wartime needs, this place has proven to be a refuge for people in need.

You are also invited to pause and say a silent prayer. In the following we want to tell a little of the history of this House of God, its interior and in conclusion something about what brought about the gospel in this congregation.

Today it is believed that the "monastery" Heeslingen and this church were founded in the year 961. "Monastery" is in quotation marks because it had originally been a *Kanonissenstift*(?). Later the monastery was moved to Zeven under the orders of St. Benedict.

In the document dated March 17 986 during the reign of Emperor Otto III (986-1002) the rights of the monastery were confirmed. In 1038, the monastery received market rights from Emperor Conrad II. The monastery was now receiving customs revenue and other income. The behavior of the nuns was bad. Worldliness and lack of discipline spread. The abbess was put aside by the Provost because she no longer could control the situation.. Thus, finally, there was nothing else left but to relocate the monastery about 5 kilometers in the middle of a forest, now present day Zeven (1142).

The church, refurbished in the last major renovation (1985-1988), originally had three aisles. It originally had wooden ceilings, but was rebuilt before the transfer of the monastery in the 12th century to the present configuration with cross vaults of fieldstone. If one enters the church, which stands in its very simplicity, you get a look at the late Gothic period altar with wings, (14 century) located in the apse. The central seated, crowned Christ, the twelve named disciples are not hard to see. These show that most of the apostles lost their lives as martyrs for their faith. But they are not dead, but live together with their risen and exalted Lord.

(picture of altar)

Here is an explanation of the characters from left to right:

S. Peter, he carries the keys to the word of Jesus from Matthew 16:19

S. Andreas: he is shown with the "St. Andrew's cross", on which he suffered martyrdom according to legend

S. James (the elder): It bears the staff of the pious pilgrim journey to his tomb in Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

S. John, he carries poison cup from which he was forced to drink, according to legend, without harm to him.

S. Philip, the patron saint of hatters, shown with the cross with which he preached.

S. Bartholomew: with a knife in one hand and a piece of skin in the other hand, since he was executed by being skinned.

IHS: Jesus, Son of God. Savior, with the globe in his hand, ruler of the world. In the other hand was probably the scepter.

S. Matthew, with the quill in his hand as a writer of the Gospel.

S. Thomas, with a lance, as he had been killed in India with a lance.

S. James (the lesser) illustrated with the fuller staff, the patron saint of dyers and cloth fullers.

S. Judas, Judas Thaddaeus (Mark 3.18)

S. Simon: illustrated with a saw. He is supposed to have been sawed up alive.

S. Matthias: illustrated with an executioner's axe. He may have been decapitated with an axe.

Only the altar and pulpit survived the fire of 1620. The pews burned. The inlay in the pulpit tells us of its installation in 1593. The Bible words that are around the sounding board and on the panels of the pulpit speak of the responsibility of the preacher and the hearers, but also of what the risen Lord himself will work through His Word:

(Picture of pulpit)

The panels from right to left: "One who can do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask and understand, to him be glory in the church, in Christ Jesus for all generations forever and ever." Ephesians 3:20 "Whoever hears My word and believes him who sent me, hath everlasting life." John 5:24 "He who hears you hears me, and who despises you, despises Me." Luke 10:16 "When you stand praying, forgive anyone you have something against, that your Father in heaven forgives you." Mark 11:25 "Do not worry about what to say or how to say it, because it will be given to you at that hour what to say." Matthew 10:19 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17 At the top of the pulpit: "Whoever is of God heareth God's words" John 8:47 "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Matthew 04.05

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Baptismal font caption:

The baroque baptismal font dates from 1644 and was donated by an Eckhoff family. For over 350 years, it has served in the baptismal service, linking the generations together.

Organ caption:

The organ was built in 1961 on the occasion of the 1000 year anniversary celebration. It was developed by Hammer, Hanover, and was refurbished in 1987 and expanded.

Lower left:

Early on, Heeslingen “flirted” with the teachings of Luther, but it took quite a long time until the Reformation took effect here. From 1606 Lutheran preachers stood in the pulpit. In 1642 under Pastor Gerhard Meyer, the Reformation had fully taken effect.

In this year the roof of the church burned.. It also affected the interior. For example, the pews were destroyed. Miraculously, the altar and pulpit survived the fire. That same year the church was equipped with the pews that exist today.

The carved front left end of the first pew bears the date and the name of the former pastor.

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The carved crucifix above the altar is from 1672.

In that year, the round fieldstone tower was destroyed by lightning. In 1897 the church received a generous donation of a new steeple.

(Picture of crucifix)

The medallions in the three windows of the apse have a great significance. In them the fundamental principles of Christian faith are expressed.

From left: A snake, wrapped around a cross. It is reminiscent of John 3 where Jesus says: "As Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so must the Son of Man (on the cross) be lifted up so that all who believe in Him have eternal life." - The character of our LORD with the A and O. He is, like it says Revelation 1.8 +17, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last. Therefore we can not do anything and no one can hold his hand. – The chalice and host in the third medallion remind us for what we finally live: from His last commission for us.

(Pictures of windows)

What can be accomplished by the prayers of one man can be seen of farmer Eckhoff from Hanrade. For 30 years he prayed for a revival in Heeslingen. In 1857, his prayer was fulfilled. Wilhelm Ferdinand Krome came as an adjunct to Heeslingen, i.e. he was made assistant to the former Pastor Meyer. This Krome was an awakened man, i.e. he had been touched by the Gospel and was gifted with a love for his risen Lord. It was not easy being with the liberal old Meyer. . The revivalist preaching of his adjunct was a thorn in the eye to the old gentleman, especially as people from other communities, even beyond Heeslingen came to listen to Krome. It happened on Easter Sunday, when he was preaching, that many women from surrounding communities had come to Heeslingen to hear Krome preach. So as Pastor Meyer got wind of this, he abruptly forbade Krome to conduct Divine Worship and delivered the sermon himself. He used the Easter text to preach about the foolish women who had come to the empty grave to look for a dead Savior. He complained about the foolish women who had left their own communities to come to Heeslingen, and asked: "What are you looking for here, you do not belong to my community." That has caused quite a stir back then. But Krome then held a church service in the afternoon where he preached about the pious women who loved their dear Saviour paying their last respects and thereby meeting the Risen One. This annoyed the old pastor so much that he no longer preach from then on. But Krome had to leave then. But after Meyer's retirement resignation, Krome's brother Gustav became pastor at Heeslingen in 1866, who continued the work that his brother had begun. Thus, the revival took hold in Heeslingen and spread more and more. Gustav Krome was then in touch with Louis Harms in Hermannsburg and since then there exists for a connection to this day.

As a result of the revival, a brass ensemble (first Sunday of Advent 1873) and a church choir (1886) were established that exist to this day. The praise of God has not abated since then in the community.

After World War II, Pastor Chris and Pastor Birck brought a piece of Lutheran pietism, as practiced in Krelingen. The community work and especially working with the youth flourish. Today there are many children in the community groups and boy groups and over 20 home circles. The center of it all is still the church service. So it happens that on Sunday the church is usually full. Continued prayers can have such results! An example of encouragement for us today, new and great to ask of God and to be expected.

Back –

O Lord

Make me an instrument of your peace:
That I sow love, where there is hatred,
that I forgive when one offends,
that I unite where there is strife,
that I speak truth, where error prevails,
that I awaken hope where despair torments,
that I light a light where darkness reigns,
that I bring joy where there is sadness.

Oh Lord, let me seek you:
not that I be consoled
but that I comfort,
not that I am understood,
but that I understand
not that I am loved,
but that I love.

For it is in giving that we receive,
who forgets himself, who finds
who forgives is forgiven,
and who dies is born to eternal life.

Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi