

DER TOD IST VERSCHLUNGEN
IN DEN SIEG

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

„Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.“ These words from Psalm 116 came to my mind when news reached us this morning that our former Director of Missions, brother and friend

Rev. Ernst Vatter, DD

was unexpectedly called to his eternal home during the night of January 6th – 7th.

As of yet, we can not believe that he is no longer with us. We had planned to meet for lunch on Thursday, January 12th to touch base and chat – an appointment which is not going to be kept. Deeply saddened we grieve with all family members and friends. One of the greats in God's kingdom and the ministry of Liebenzell Mission has left us. He had a profound impact in the lives of many people and our organization.



Ernst Vatter was born on March 18th, 1929, in Gönningen. He was raised by his godmother from the age of three.

These are some of the touchstones of his life:

- Upon completion of secondary school he attended a teacher training college in Esslingen, his schooling was interrupted by rubble removal assignments in Stuttgart.
- As a result of mistaken identity he became a prisoner of war with the French. Here, he experienced the love of Jesus Christ through a fellow prisoner. In the fall of 1946 an evangelization was hosted by the Evangelical Fellowship in Gönningen. Because of repeated requests by his aunt to attend the meetings with her, he agreed to come along one evening, just to make her happy. And then the miracle happened - God reached his heart. Very soon after, he was prepared to commit his life to full time service to God.
- He applied to Liebenzell Mission and withdrew from the teacher training program in Saulgau he had resumed just previously. He attended the seminary from 1947 – 1951 and completed his practicum with the SV district in Albstadt-Ebingen.
- In the spring of 1952 he went to England for language training. In the fall of the same year he traveled to Japan by boat. He then served in the Land of the Rising Sun as a missionary from 1952 – 1966. He served as area director, starting in 1960.
- He was wedded to Sigrid, ne Schambach, in December of 1954, in Japan. The couple were blessed with four children.
- During their first furlough the couple experience a particularly trying time, as Ernst Vatter became deathly ill and was treated in several hospitals in Tübingen until it was finally determined that one of his adrenal glands had failed. His condition deteriorated rapidly. But in spite of a very poor prognosis the



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family experienced God's wonderful intervention when Ernst Vatter did survive after a special prayer by Pastor Hertel. Although strongly discouraged from doing so by his responsible medical professor, he returned to Japan with his family after convalescing. In his luggage he carried 3000 cortisone pills.

- Starting in 1966 he was the head of "Global Missions", which was restructured during his tenure. To him we may attribute the fact that Liebenzell Mission is one of the great German-speaking mission organizations. Beyond his leadership tasks, he also assumed positions of responsibility in the area of evangelisation. Thus he was the president of the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Evangelikaler Missionen, AEM* (Association of Evangelical Missions), which he had co-founded.

He was on the board of directors of the German Evangelical Alliance,

He was a co-founder of the Independent Mission Academy in Korntal, which he also led as volunteer director between 1994 and 1996.

From 1977 to 1995 he was a member of the Provincial Synod of Württemberg.

- In 1988 BIOLA University in California bestowed upon him an honorary doctorate
- Led LMI as acting Director from 1992 to 1993.
- In 1994 he began his retirement, while continuing on as coordinator of LMI.
- He was the head of the South-German Fellowship Association from 2001 to 2003.
- Until his death he traveled the country as a sought-after conference speaker and proclaimer of the Word.

The death of his beloved Sigrid fourteen months ago did cast a dark shadow into his life. Time and again he expressed in words how he missed his counterpart. In spite of his loss, Ernst continued untiringly with preaching and speaking engagements. After moving to Unterlengenhardt, having sold their house last year, a fall that resulted in several broken ribs and provided him with several very difficult weeks. But as soon as he was somewhat better he resumed his speaking engagements.

Ernst Vatter was God's gift to Liebenzell Mission. He was a man of great foresight and an impressive spiritual personality, imbued with a refreshing human charity. After entering into retirement he was a good advisor, a friend and advocate of Liebenzell Mission.

We praise God for his life and his service. Unfailingly our Lord made things turn out for good in his life. Even with all the pain it brings us, his death is a merciful calling-home. Ernst has reached the goal of his life and faith. We look forward to a reunion in God's new world and may comfort ourselves with this awareness.

We grieve with all his loved ones and friends and ask God to comfort them over this severe loss, entrusting them to Him, our God of mercy.

Bad Liebenzell, January 7th, 2012

(signed) Rev. Detlef Krause

PS: The date of the funeral will be decided by the Vatter family next week.