



March 2025

Installations are funny things. Maybe not funny “haha,” but funny “hmm...interesting!” Church events where a pastor, elder, or deacon is installed into a new role within the life of the church are a combination of the holy and the bureaucratic, both spiritual event and mere formality. At an installation, the same hands that lay heavy on shoulders during Spirit-filled prayer also fill out and sign forms and certificates. Holy callings are declared from pulpits and legal contracts are signed in church offices. The mystical mixes with the mundane.



Above: The whole fam after the installation. Below: Rev. Dr. Setri Nyomi (WCRC interim General Secretary) and Scott Engelsman (RCA Chief Mission Officer) during the service.



On Sunday, February 23, while Chelsea and I prepared to be installed into our roles as pastors of the RELISH worshipping community, we felt this same measure of both honor and routine that has been felt by everyone who has been ordained and installed into a role in the life of the church. But over the course of one conversation, something changed.

Up until that morning, we had been thinking of the installation as something being done *for us*: we were being installed into the roles of pastors of RELISH, prayers were being said *for us*, the congregation was charged to care *for us* even as we served them. But what if something even more beautiful was happening here?

RELISH will celebrate its 10th anniversary this coming Pentecost, but those present a decade ago are mostly no longer present today. Its founding pastor, Rev. Gretchen Schoon Tanis, returned to the United States nearly a year ago. Key leaders from the Reformed Church of Hannover who supported this English-speaking service have retired or moved away. The names that appear in early minutes are mostly unfamiliar as I read them. Time has left its mark on the RELISH community.

And yet, because of God’s faithfulness, RELISH is still here a decade later. That may sound funny for churches that have histories spanning centuries, but transition presents a unique challenge for churches whose members may stay for a few years, at most. When a “long-term volunteer” has

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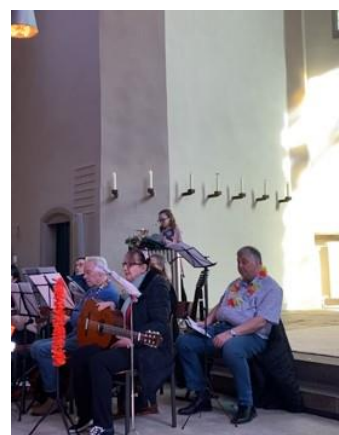
been working with a ministry for two years, that helps reshape the mindset of anniversaries worth celebrating.

It seems, then, that our installation was not only something *for us*, but it was an occasion worth celebrating in the life of the church. It was a testament to the enduring work that God has done over the last ten years among a group of people that is always evolving and changing. It was a testament to the continuing support of the Reformed Church of Hannover and their growing desire to unite with their international siblings in Christ, rather than to keep their distance. It was a testament to hope for the future, that foreigners like us might continue to hear the Word of God and continue to be formed into disciples of Jesus Christ for many years ahead.

Installations are funny things. They are functional and formulaic, emotional and empowering, remembrances of the past and resolutions for the future. A new page is turned, a new chapter begun. But the same God - faithful yesterday, today, and tomorrow - is still writing the story.

Prayers answered from our last newsletter:

- Lorelei and Caspian are doing well in school! We praise God for good friends who are coming beside them as they learn about grammatical parts of speech and reading German.
- We bought bikes and are learning more and more different ways to get around our city.
- We do praise Jesus for all the people who came together to worship for our installation, and the new members who have even started coming this past month.



Above left to right: The older kids dressed up for a school event; The kids watching an amazing sunset out our living room window; Lorelei reading for International Women's Day of Prayer.

Ways to continue praying for us:

- Next year Lorelei will need to go to "gymnasium," the German word for middle/high school that prepares you for university track. We have visited four schools, and have an interview at the top choice on April 22 that we would love prayers for our family.
- We knew coming into this call that people would both move in and out of RELISH. We are already preparing our hearts to have a couple we have come to love leave sometime this summer. We pray for their call and our grief in missing them.
- We pray for the community as we move into the Easter season here soon.

We are grateful for you all! Please continue to reach out and send us notes, messages, and emails!

With gratitude,
Jeff and Chelsea Lampen