60th Anniversary of the KREUZKIRCHE in Addis Ababa
Ecumenical Service September 20th 2026 - 16th Sunday after Trinity

Ps 26.8 / Ps 121.8 / S. John 14.2ff

Domprediger em. / Dean em
The Very Reverend Joachim Hempel, Brunswick/Braunschweig Germany

Peace be with you - Peace !

Brothers and sisters, sisters and brothers in the name of the Lord,

In between 'ENKUTATASH' and 'MESQEL' we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the dedication of our 'Kreuzkirche', of our Church of the Holy Cross, home to German speaking Christians, more or less faithful ones, protestant-lutherans, roman-catholics aswell and a lot of associated fellows.

When in October 1973 / Tekempt 1966 E.C. the great Ethiopian sportsman and barefooted Olympic gold medallist ABEBE BIKILA died, the funeral procession passed by the German Church's compound on its way to the cemetry; the German pastor and his family were on holiday so the young curate at that time (his older version you are just looking at) had to decide, and he decided to open the church doors, enlighten the candles on the altar and to open the compounds gate to pay respect to the dead and to the mourners passing by. I put on my clergy shirt and Ato Teshome, who was the Ato Daniel at that time, and myself stood outside, open doors behind us - and a lot of people risked a short glimpse inside where normaly the gate was closed. One old man, a very old man carrying his stick in the neck stood for a moment than asking Teshome: 'mindenaw bet naw? What is this house here? Ye German bete christian' was the answer and he was wondering asking in Amharic: „Are there Christians in Germany?"

Ok, no internet, no world wide web, only newspapers like THE ETHIOPIAN HERALD, radio and one, only one TV-channel – information was poor, knowledge was a lifelong journey and for sure: not all Ethiopians went to school at that ancient times!
Are there Christians in Germany ? - nowadays we have to answer: more or

less! But this is not a matter of big numbers, yes, there are faithful Christians worldwide and churches around the globe, and like in Ethiopia's LALIBELA in Germany's city of Brunswick an 850 years old Cathedral opens its doors for daily services, too.

So, those Germans living and working in Ethiopia 70 years ago were gathering for Sunday services mainly on the compound of the than HERMANNSBURG MISSION. The circumstances of founding and building an own church where German speaking christians could gather has been mentioned on several occations; but today thank's to God's grace and brave peoples work the Kreuzkirche survived all turbulences inside and outside the congregation throughout 60 years.
„IT IS A SHELTER FOR SOUL AND BODY AS EACH CHURCH IS WORLDWIDE“ - it is a shelter because the Lord is our shepherd and he is our guide throughout our lifelong way on earth. As christians we believe that this earth is not our eternal homested, Jesus tells according to S. John: *„Do not be worried and upset, believe in God and believe also in me. There are many rooms in my fathers's house, and I am going to prepare a place for you. I would not tell you this if it were not so.“*
He is caring and preparing for our eternal home, and we, in the meantime, we on our daily way of life enter wooden or stonern or clay shelter houses, places where the Lord's glory dwells and where we can worship him.

The Kreuzkirche is a shelter on our way throughout our lifetime, an oasis of the gosepel's fresh breeze; here is being good for my soul, my heart, my thoughts and dreams, and here is where my conscience is motivated to look for sheltering the needy ones. That's why the idea of a social neighbourhood program started which became the GERMAN CHURCH's SCOOL after some years!
I am sheltered by the Lord and that's why sheltering the poorest of the poorest, the blind and handicapped ones, the hungry and thirsty ones is a sign of christian love and charity.
So, here is the special compound of German speaking people to reaffirm one's faith and to show solidarity to those living around as we are guests in this country as we all are guests on earth – our eternal home is with the Lord.
Lord, I love the place where your house is, where your name is honoured, your words are told, your gospel is listened to, your glory is sung; I love the house which is dedicated to worship you, the Almighty, my creator and my saviour.

Here I learn that life is not at its end in cemetries, life is eternal in you and I will be sheltered in that house, where Jesus prepared a place – a place even for me, your beloved child. - Thank's to the Lord that there are churches around the globe, big cathedrals, calm monasteries, busy and silent places, - these very special houses, very, very different to our normal houses in Addis Ababa, in World Centers and parking spaces, very different but so special, so important, so unique:
And like in a mosaic each church worldwide is a diamond stone – missing if collapsing because of brokenness or age, of war or terror attacks, of bad mantaining or poor use, but an enlightened diamond stone when the Holy Cross is enlightened by candles, honoured by songs and voices, the gospel proclaimed and where you, sister, and you, brother , when we serve the Lord., with gratitude to those Germans, Swiss, Austrians who were encouraged to plan, to lay the foundation stone and errect this remarkable building the KREUZKIRCHE of the**" German Speaking Protestant-Evangelical Church in Ethiopia".**

And for a very short moment we think of the late Emperor Haile Selassie I. who dedicated this compound nearby Jan Meda, which was Jan Hoy Meda at that time, where we – living and working and gathering here nearby – often had to listen to the rehearsal of the Imperial Military Brass Band excercising Austrian composer Strauß father's „Radetzky-March"; since 60 years the music in here are psalms and choralsongs, classical and more modern hymns and melodies, are spirituals and gospels to praise the Lord.
As sounds on Jan Meda have changed throughout the years and inspite of the sometimes very noisy sounds of a big city like Addis Ababa are everywhere – you will listen to the sounds of all churches and even mosques: Lord's glory is amongst us and will stay with us throughout our life.

The Lord will protect you and will keep you, he will protect you as you come and as you go now and for ever!
This is a house where his blessing will meet you and touch you, yeah, now and for ever.

Happy birthday KREUZKIRCHE!
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit
AMEN.