



ANTJE NISSEN

1931-2024

**Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life.
Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,
and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.
Do you believe this?"**

John 11:25-26

My Testimony – Antje Nissen

On Sunday morning, July 26, 1931, I was born to my parents Waldemar and Ilse Nissen. I had one brother who was two years older than me, and another brother who was born five years after me. We were a very happy family, and our home was full of music. Both of my parents played the piano, sometimes playing together and using four hands at once. When I was six, my older brother and I started piano lessons. At the age of eight, I learned to play the accordion. All of us liked to read books. On rainy weekends we played board games together.

Our family lived on the outskirts of the city, with meadows and a little stream, where we loved to play with other kids. Sometimes I would just lie in the tall



grass, and listen to the bees. We also went with our parents on hikes or picnics. Every summer, before the war, our whole family went to visit our grandparents in Kiel. The beach was our attraction, where we spent many days. We played in the sand, and enjoyed the ocean. I learned to

swim when I was four years old, and my brother started swimming when he was six years old. Visiting my grandparents in Kiel was the highlight of our year.

Since we lived in a region with much snow in the winter, we enjoyed skiing, and also went ice skating on a frozen lake. With all this happiness, we never heard about Jesus. My father grew up in a born-again family, but when he was seventeen years old, he went astray. One time, when I was about 3 years old, my saved grandmother taught me a song:

*Breit aus die Flügel beide,
O Jesu, meine Freude,
und nimm dein Küchlein ein.
Will Satan mich verschlingen,*

*(Spread out both Your wings,
O Jesus, my great joy,
And embrace your little chick.
If Satan wants to harm me,*

*so lass die Englein singen:
"Dies Kind soll unverletzt sein."*

*Then let the angels sing:
"This child will not be harmed.")*

My father's parents and family attended the Lutheran Church. Besides weekly attendance, a group of that church group would get together to seek the Lord. My grandfather was in charge of that group. One day he chose a song about heaven that they were to sing. Then he sat down and went to heaven.



World War II changed everything. My father was drafted immediately, and we were forced to live without him for six years. Because of my father's job, our family lived closer to Poland. Our hometown was Kiel, in North Germany. As time went on, British airplanes bombed many important cities, including our city. Many nights,

when the alarm was given, we would quickly get up, get dressed, and be rushed quickly to the bomb safety shelter. Sometimes we would spend the whole night there. When we returned home, we did not know if our house would still be there. One time, when the alarm was given during the day, my mother, younger brother, and I were shopping in the city. We made it to our bomb shelter. After some hours, we returned home. But where was my older brother? After a long time, he returned home. When the alarm had been given, he had gone down into the cellar of the next house. For the first time, he saw people praying on their knees.

At that time, we lived near Poland. One day my mother found out that the Russians were coming closer and decided that we should return to our hometown, Kiel. We left everything behind, and went to the train station. One train had come in full of soldiers who had left the front. It was the last train to North Germany. We did not know how to get into this full train, and I started to cry and sob. Some soldiers saw our plight and got us in through the window. The soldiers gave us all a seat. All went well on our trip, until we came to a forest and there were some British airplanes flying very low over us. We all had to get out of the train and hide in the forest. But a miracle happened and the planes left, so we were able to continue until we came near Hamburg, which was in flames. With a smaller train, we came pretty close to where my father was serving at a flak tower (anti-aircraft gun tower) to shoot down airplanes.

It was too dangerous for us to be there. As refugees, we were assigned a room at the forester's home. My job was to go through the forest (which was not dangerous) to get milk from a farm. One day as I returned, a British tank suddenly appeared in front of me. The soldiers quickly waved and motioned that they would not harm me. Instead, they gave me chocolate and some fruit. We gathered that the war had come to an end. Shortly after the war ended, my father was able to join us.

We had no car, and there was no bus running. My father hired someone with two horses and a wagon to get us to Kiel. For those of us who had not seen the destruction of the city, returning to Kiel was overwhelming. We found out later that three-fourths of Kiel had been destroyed. My grandfather's house and the house next door were standing, but the other houses in the area were completely ruined. Thankfully, one apartment was not occupied, and we could move in. There was no glass in any of the windows, and we did not have any furniture, until our relatives brought some for us. The five of us lived and slept in a small room on mattresses and cooked on a little stove. There was cardboard in the windows. Food was scarce. Even though there were trials, we were so glad because our father was with us.

We were glad when my father got a job in the school. Things began to improve. It was now about two years since we had moved to Kiel. One night my mother became very sick, and was taken to the hospital. She died one week later. She was forty-one years old. I was fifteen. My father had known Jesus but had drifted away. The night after my mother's death, he returned to his loving Shepherd.

However, my happiness was gone. Any thought of music disappeared, and I felt empty and sad. One year after my mother's death, my older brother and I had our confirmation in the Lutheran Church, which had been partly destroyed. Only one room could be used in the whole church building. My Bible verse was: "*But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved*" - Matthew 24:13.



My younger brother needed a mother. I was still at home when my father remarried. This was very hard for me at first, but later on, I had a loving relationship with my step-mother. She brought her grand piano, and she and my father continued to play together, using four hands at times. After I finished school, I was not sure

about my further education. I helped for a short time at a Children's Home, where my aunt had a leading position. At the same time, her sister also visited, and asked me to stay with her and my uncle for some time in the southern part of Germany. They were born-again Christians, and attended a Pentecostal church. They encouraged me to start reading the Bible, and gave me one. I was fascinated with the passages that I read, and I continued day after day. Suddenly, after about half a year, it dawned on me one day that the truths I was reading were for me. Jesus died for me, for my sins. I acknowledged this, and before I knew it, I had become a new person. All sadness was gone, and my heart was full of peace and joy. I am very thankful that Jesus was so very merciful and saved me. He gave me a great desire to live for Him. From then on, Jesus began leading me step by step.

Soon after my salvation, I came with some friends to America. When I came to the United States, I expected to return to Germany after a certain time to continue my education. But God had a very different plan for my life. I began attending the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church shortly after I had been saved in Germany. I was drawn to the meetings like a magnet. Right from the beginning, I opened my heart to praise, and I accepted the Word of God preached by Hans Waldvogel and other ministers. I started to seek the Lord, and my life began to change. Gordon and Caroline Gardiner influenced my life the most. They took time to instruct, encourage, and help me along the narrow way. They also introduced me to Pilgrim Camp. Pilgrim Camp became the training place for my future life. I served the Lord as a counselor and in other departments. After seeking the Lord earnestly, I received a mighty baptism in the Holy Spirit. That experience completely changed my life and my future. I also received my call into the ministry at Pilgrim Camp. I prayed for one whole year to find out God's will for my life.



The result was that Jesus led me to minister in Germany for fifteen years. God led me to Hamburg, a fellowship church of the Ridgewood Pentecostal Church. For one year, I helped to start the Sunday School. I also served for thirteen years as the superintendent of the Sunday School in Wuppertal, another fellowship church. When I started in Wuppertal, the Sunday School

was for children, ages three to fourteen. At that time, we had over eighty children that we taught about Jesus. Sometimes I played the organ for the meetings. Two of us launched out, and started children's meetings in another part of Wuppertal. They were very well attended.



I also helped at our mission in Orai, India for seven months. The mission had two schools, the English and Hindi schools. During that time, I had the privilege to teach over 1,000 children the way of salvation. Later on, I helped two more times at the mission in Orai, India.

During my time in Germany, I was able to return to America some summers to help at Pilgrim Camp as a counselor. After fifteen years, the Lord led me back to Ridgewood, New York.

While serving the Lord in Brooklyn, I helped in different ways. For two years, I was the Primary Superintendent at the Williamsburg Sunday School. During this time, I also went once a week to Creedmoor Psychiatric Center, where I ministered to a group of needy seventeen-year-old boys. Once a week, I would pick children up from school on Wednesday afternoons to teach them about Jesus. I also regularly brought children to Sunday School, and the children's prayer meetings. During the summer, I continued to serve as a counselor at Pilgrim Camp. I also taught children in Vacation Bible School. Jesus, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit, became very real to me. All throughout those years, Jesus was my Good Shepherd; guiding me, protecting me, and encouraging me. I am full of thanksgiving, and can say that my Savior has been all that I needed every step of the way.



Her Work at Pilgrim Camp - Paul Munsinger

Shortly after Antje came to the U.S. (possibly within days of her arrival), she became part of the Pilgrim Camp staff—something she would do each summer for almost her entire life. She began on the housekeeping staff, and within a short time learned the language well enough to serve as a counselor. This continued for over 60 years, most of those in “the Cottage” with children ages 6-8.

Each summer at Camp we continue to hear testimonies from men and women, married and with families, who can trace their and their children’s salvation experiences to their Cottage days with Sister Antje. She, without a doubt, had a special gift of making the way of Salvation clear and comprehensible to even the youngest of children.



It was only mobility issues and the challenging upstate terrain that interrupted that important ministry in her life. But even when she was no longer physically able to be at Camp and serve in a counseling capacity, she took on a behind-the-scenes role of faithfully and diligently praying, especially for the children. Only eternity will reveal the impact Sister Antje had on so many lives.



Her Work at Ridgewood Pentecostal Church - John P. Munsinger

Antje was always looking for opportunities to witness. Over the years, a number of newcomers to our church and Sunday School came as a result of a chance encounter with Antje. As she walked through the neighborhood doing her errands, she had a knack for stopping and casually chatting with a mom she came across. Inevitably, the conversation would turn to the things of God. Her winsome, non-threatening, but determined and focused way would prevail and result in her inviting the mom and her children to either church, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, or to Release Time classes. Over the years, many new members joined our Sunday School because of her loving interest in them.



Our Sunday School had a close working relationship with Pilgrim Camp. Due to the generosity of our membership, each year we were able to send about a dozen children to Camp who would otherwise not be able to go. Antje was



tireless in assuring that every slot was utilized, and then some. Her advocacy for those she felt would benefit from a time at Camp was unceasing. It involved more than just nominating candidates. It required filling out an application, and including all the health information needed to satisfy government requirements. In many cases, given the circumstances, such information was often not readily available, and would require persistency to secure needed answers. Almost without exception, after all the allocated slots were filled, and often at the

last minute, she would find one more soul who would profit by going to Camp. Not one of her requests was ever denied. Only heaven will know what her love for souls accomplished.