



SIEBENQUELL

**»A good story is always a journey.«
10 Years of Siebenquell**

Once upon a time...



Once upon a time, to be precise just over ten years ago, Rosemarie Monnerjahn and I decided that we would like to tell a good story. Exactly ten years ago, on March 1, 2013, we called Siebenquell to life. Since then we have told innumerable stories. Today, however, I would like to tell you a different story, namely, the story of our journey as Siebenquell.

The American author Michael Scott once wrote: »A good story is always a journey. It is about taking the journey, the people the hero meets along the way and how they change him or her. All stories are journeys. They don't have to be shocking or outrageous: they simply have to be interesting.« Ten years ago, as we began the work of Siebenquell and set out on a journey, we began to learn every lesson contained within Mr. Scott's quote.

From the very start we learned the truth of the line »A good story is always a journey.« That journey started long before we created Siebenquell. We knew that we wanted to work pastorally with the profound insights of the Narrative Theology of John Shea. Moreover, we wanted to share the heart, soul, and beauty of this theology with all people, not just the few who belong

to the guild of the theologians. We spent months deliberating on how to do this, before we went on to create the basic concept, find the name, and establish the courses we wished to offer. Setting all of this in motion were the real first steps of a journey in which we set out to tell a good story.

In the process of doing all that, we learned the second lesson of Michael Scott's quote. »It is about taking the journey«. For a long time, we reflected on what we would like to undertake and accomplish how we would like to work and with whom we would like to share the insights and wonders of the Narrative Theological Tradition. However, that was only our dream of the journey. From the moment we decided to make Siebenquell a reality, we had to undertake the journey, and there is a massive difference between the dream and the journey. Taking the journey is what the great stories are all about, and that entails the blood, sweat and tears of which Winston Churchill spoke. Like all great journeys we undertake, there are untold parts. We speak of the milestones, the arrivals and the struggles. The untold part of the story of a journey, are all the long, strenuous, slogging steps we take that are unseen and unsung. In storytelling there is a special use of time called »compressed time«. That is when a storyteller quickly describes in one line what would take hours, days or even years to accomplish in real time. For example, in the 1 Kings 19, 8 it is written: »And Elijah arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.« That line takes less than 10 seconds to read. But imagine what forty days and forty nights of travel mean in real time! This is a part of the story, but it is untold.

Today we know what it means to travel forty days and forty nights. The untold part of our story is what happens behind the scenes. For every course we offer, we spend untold hours in meetings, planning, creative thinking and then the preparations to make it all possible. Hardly have we finished one event, and already we head back to the drawing board to conceptualize and create the next one. We never imaged what we would need to do and what we would have to face when we set out. Nor could we have imagined how much personal loss and tragedy we would endure. We had no inkling of the crises we would have to navigate, such as the years of the Corona pandemic. We regret none of it, because even ten years later, we are willing to do what it takes to tell a good story. If anything, I think our passion for it has grown.

»It is about... the people the hero meets along the way and how they change him or her.« This is the third lesson we learned throughout the journey of our story. As Tolkien taught us so well: Not without companions! Early on, we turned to Patrizia Monnerjahn, Rosemarie's oldest daughter, to guide us through the process of creating the logo and the look of our work. Unfailingly, she has designed for us every program on paper as well as in the internet with a beauty and an elegance that delights the eye but also conveys the essentials of what wish to say. I often refer to her as the storyteller of colour and form.

Sr. Andrea and Sr. Josefa have become cherished partners of our work, gifted and highly talented storytellers in their own right. In Lebensquell, they have brought the deep passions of Narrative Theology to Datteln and opened the biblical stories up in awe-inspiring ways for so many people. Sylvia Ditt has graced our pages and courses with her lyrical gifts that wind around the mind and the heart in subtle and beautiful ways. Karl Ditt has enriched our work and our programs with his artistic talents, letting art tell our stories, challenge out preconceived notions of what they mean and expand our horizons as to where they might yet lead us.

Finally, there have also been the many friends we have encountered over the ten years, including the many who have gone before us into the house of the Father. With them all, we have done the three things essential to a community of believers. We gathered the folks, from the Dolomites to banks of the Rhine. We broke the bread, from the altars and from tables laden with treats and delights that reminded us that »the guest be welcome«. And we told the stories, countless stories: from Shakespeare and Goethe to the tales of daily life. Mr. Scott was right. »They don't have to be shocking or outrageous: they simply have to be interesting.« In addition, those stories have widened our world, add layer upon layer of depth to our hearts,

widened and moistened our eyes, and created the one thing we so ardently hoped for ten years ago: the intense hunger for more stories.

We set out to tell a good story. Ten years later, it dawns on me, that we not only managed that, but that in the process, we have also lived a very good story.

Erik Riechers SAC

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