

THE SAINT TIM'S TIMES

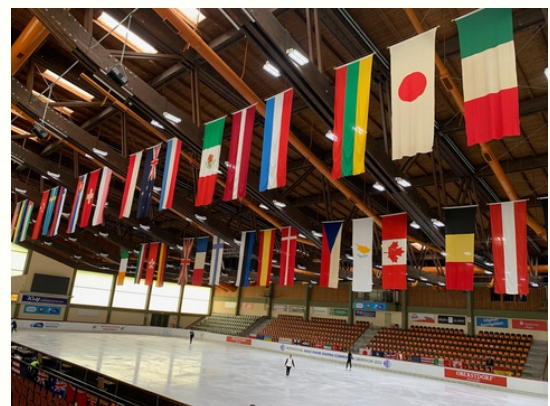
A Visit to Oberstdorf

by *Joyce and Brenda Wittman*

The village of Oberstdorf is located in southwestern Germany in the region of Bavaria, close to the Austrian border. Recently I traveled there with my daughter Brenda. Our 12-day journey began on May 11th and we arrived at Munich airport the next morning. A train ride, close to three hours through the countryside, brought us to Oberstdorf. We enjoyed seeing many unique villages, lots of livestock, glacial rivers and clear streams along the way.

Dr. Brenda Wittman is a pediatric oncologist living in Anchorage, Alaska. She is dedicated to figure skating as her fitness focus and as a break from the intensity of her work treating children with cancer and other blood disorders. This trip to Germany was for her to participate in an international competition for adult figure skaters. The flags of 34 different countries were displayed over the main ice rink, honoring the various places represented by the competitors. Many of these skaters had not gotten together since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, so there was plenty of celebrating and renewing of friendships in addition to the often spirited competition. We kept busy attending official ice practice sessions before the events, and then enjoyed the actual skating and medal award ceremonies.

continued page 2





There is more to experience in Oberstdorf in springtime than the usual indoor skating, hiking, riding a downhill rail coaster and visiting mountaintops by gondola. Local color involves the resident cows. Early in the mornings neighborhood cows are herded to the meadows at the higher elevations to graze all day and then, usually around 5:30 pm, their ringing cow bells announce the trip back down from the hills to their individual homes for milking. We got to be up close and personal for this “cow parade” as they walked down the sidewalks and in the middle of the narrow cobblestone-lined streets.

We spent time tasting our way around the village and enjoying the area specialties. One final delight was an ice cream dessert both artistic and delicious. “Spaghetti Ice” added some sweetness to our memorable mountain adventure.

ECU Chamber Singers take New York

by Peter Woodruff

When I agreed to sing for one more year in the ECU Chamber Singers as an alumnus this past year, I didn't know I was in for a weeklong tour at the end of the year that would take me around North Carolina, Virginia, and New York. The choir performed concerts at Centenary UMC in New Bern, Edenton UMC in Raleigh, and Annandale UMC in Annandale, VA, near Washington DC. In addition, we visited several high schools along the way. We really enjoy these performances for many reasons; we have the opportunity to see new places, sing in beautiful spaces, introduce young music students to high-level choral singing, and meet all kinds of enthusiastic and grateful folks at these churches who are delighted to host us. Dr. James Franklin, the director of the Chamber Singers, sees the biennial tour as a chance to raise the profile of the ECU choral program throughout the region, recruit students to the ECU program, and to cap off the year with a lot of fun and exciting performances for us.

continued page 3



But the most exciting part of the trip were the three days we spent in New York City. We were lucky to have plenty of activities planned to take advantage of the many things the city has to offer, and a good amount of free time to explore on our own as well. Whether it was exploring Central Park with my friends, attending top-notch performances of *La Boheme* and *Sweeney Todd* at the Metropolitan Opera and on Broadway, touring St. Patrick's Cathedral, attending Evensong at historic St. Thomas Church, or having a large yellow snake draped over my shoulders by a street performer in Times Square, there was no shortage of adventures to be had!

But for me, the highlight of the tour was our performance at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. This is the cathedral for the Episcopal Diocese of New York, and depending on what basis of measurement is used, is either the largest or the second-largest Anglican cathedral in the world - and it is only two-thirds complete! Like many major cathedrals around the world, it is fully functional despite being unfinished. Full completion of the design will take decades, or even centuries.

Of all the repertoire we sang in that exquisitely beautiful and solemn space, the most important to me was the *Credo* from the *Cantus Missae* by Josef Rheinberger. The *Cantus Missae* is a choral mass setting, a cappella, for double choir - in other words, two equal choirs of SATB voices. The music functions like a dialogue between the two choirs. Our 40-voice group splits into two equally-voiced 20-member groups. The *Credo* movement is the traditional Latin text of the Nicene Creed. The piece is a true masterwork of sacred choral music, and it was such a profoundly joyful experience to sing it in such an incredible place. It was far beyond just a musical performance; for me it was a sacred and holy moment. I'm lucky to have been able to continue to sing with this fine group for another year, and grateful to John for allowing and encouraging me to take some time to continue singing and rehearsing with them throughout the year.

Pitt Pirates: Robotics 'Round the World

by Jack, rising 10th grade

The FIRST Organization is a non profit Robotics company that hosts three levels of Robotics competitions yearly on a worldwide scale. These 3 levels of competitions require a team to build a robot for a specific challenge that was presented that year. Depending on the level that you sign up for there will be different size teams, as well as different age groups and the size of the robot that you are making.

I participated in a FRC (First Robotics Competition) team called the Pitt Pirates this year, which is the biggest of the three, having 30+ members and a 125 pound robot that is made every year. This team is for 9th through 12th grade and gets 6 weeks to design, build and code a robot for the challenge that is presented that year. The other two levels are FTC (First Tech Challenge) for people from 6th-12th and a 10-15 person team for a 40 pound robot, as well as FLL (First Lego League) for elementary and middle school kids that is a lego robot.

Each year there is a topic that all levels have a different challenge relating to it. For example, last year's topic/theme was Energize, so all teams' challenges were relating to electricity or powering something up. All of these challenges give the robots multiple things to do for a certain amount of points in a timed manner. The FTC and FRC challenges have two different ways of controlling their robot.

In the first 15 seconds of the match they have to code their robot to do stuff automatically and they are not allowed to touch the controller. After the 15 seconds is up they get 135 seconds to control the robot to get as many points as they can. 90% of the teams use 2 controllers/people to control the robot because of how many different inputs that they have to press.

continued page 5





The FLL teams have to fully code their robot to move around, with no controllers at any point. The FTC and FRC robots also work together with other random teams and their robots to form alliances. The FTC are paired up with one random team and the FRC get 2 teams which both go against an opposing alliance making it a 2v2 and a 3v3. These teams get about 5 minutes notice to see who they are paired with and plan what points they want to go for.

My FRC team was lucky enough to make it all the way to the World's Competition in Houston Texas to compete with 31 different countries for the championship title. There were

45,000 people there and 600 different teams from across the world. The stands were so long that one side could be screaming their heads off and the people on the other side could not hear them at all.

One of my favorite parts of the championship was to talk with the other teams and look at the many different robot designs that people used. I was able to trade my team's shirt for other teams from Israel. The amount of positive energy that this organization gives off is immense. No one here was a sore loser even if they came dead last because they were just happy to be a part of robotics.

In our off season our team does many outreach and volunteering events, as well as host a summer camp. I don't know about other teams but I know that for our team all you have to do to be a part of it is show up to practice and volunteering events. Our head mentor doesn't care how smart you are as long as you show up, which I can assume is the same for many other teams.