

Welcome by Pastor Elke Stephan
(A summary of her spoken remarks)

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests, dear residents of Langenburg, I extend a warm welcome to you here in our Protestant Town Church for a special evening—one that falls within the year marking Langenburg's 800th anniversary and coincides with the nationwide "Open Monument Day." Open Monument Day invites us not merely to visit historic sites, but to discover them anew: to explore their history, their significance, and the lives of the people connected to them.

There could hardly be a more fitting place for this than this very church. For here, we encounter more than just architecture and artworks from centuries past; this church also preserves the memory of individuals who shaped Langenburg.

One of them was Johann Heinrich von Olnhausen, a chancery secretary for the House of Hohenlohe; he lived from 1623 to 1677 and served the rulers of Hohenlohe-Langenburg here in the town.

In 1695, his four children commissioned the epitaph dedicated to him and his wife, Magdalena Elisabeth—the very monument you see here in our church. Above the depiction of the Road to Emmaus scene, there is an inscription that has given this evening its title: "Lord, stay with us, for evening is falling." We will encounter this phrase in various forms throughout the evening.

In fact, it has already greeted us. For Bernhardt Brand-Hofmeister opened the evening with the hymn "Abide with Me"—"Stay with me, Lord." Tonight, music and the spoken word come together to tell a story. A story of comfort and hope, of war and reconstruction, of Langenburg and its people—and of the question of what sustains individuals and communities, even in difficult times.

After the first part of the concert, Gerd Ohlhauser will guide us back from this epitaph to a time some four hundred years ago—to the era of the Thirty Years' War and to figures such as Johann Heinrich von Olnhausen and Johann Christoph Assum, as well as the people who bore responsibility for this small lordship at that time.

We are especially delighted that so many members and descendants of the von Olnhausen and Ohlhauser families have traveled from near and far to join us today. Some of you have made very long journeys to be here. A warm welcome to Langenburg to you all.

This evening is an event organized by the Protestant congregation of Langenburg. Admission is free. We would greatly appreciate any donations; they help us fund this evening's event while also supporting the necessary exterior renovation of our town church.

A brief note regarding the program: We ask that you kindly refrain from applauding after every single musical piece. The first block of the concert is intended to be experienced as a unified musical whole. There will be an opportunity for applause before the talk and, of course, again at the end of the evening.

Afterward, members of the von Olnhausen, Ohlhauser, Ohlheiser, and Ohlhäuser families are cordially invited to the Restaurant Antica.

I now wish us all an evening in which this church truly becomes an open monument: open to music, open to history, and open to the questions that both pose to us.

A warm welcome.

Elke Stephan
Langenburg, September 13, 2025