

[Dead Man's Boots: Broken Children Find Mercy in Leipzig](#)

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—[By Rev. Hugo Gevers](#), Alliance Missionary, Lutheran Church Mission (LKM) Missionary to Migrants and Children in Volkmarshdorf, Leipzig.



The rock star and song-writer Gordon Sumner, alias “Sting,” describes a moment in his childhood when writing the lyrics for the song “Dead Man’s Boots.” The shoes of Sting’s father are an ever-present reminder of his responsibility to follow in the footsteps of this father. In the end Sting decides to go a completely different route than his father. In the song he concludes, “Rather barefoot in the wide world than limited to the shoes of my father.”

Most of us have a strong influence and many fulfilling experiences from our childhood. It is only by means of our background that we can make choices in later life. Sometimes we decide to take a completely different route than the way of our parents. Most of the time we remain children of our parents making exactly the same mistakes as they made before.

Can you imagine what it means to have absolutely no father or mother figure from childhood? The tragedy of many children in Western Europe is precisely this. Some children never have the privilege of even choosing whether to follow in their parents’ footsteps or not. Some are even denied the warm hug and love of a motherly/fatherly home. On Thursday, 12. March 2015 the author and psychologist Moritz Nestor visited [Lukaskirche](#) (St. Luke’s Church) in Volkmarshdorf to talk about exactly this issue. The talk was held as part of the international book fair which is annually held in Leipzig. Nestor makes an emphatic appeal to parents, teachers and educators not to abdicate on their responsibility to teach. As a psychologist Nestor admits that psychologists have contributed to this catastrophe in education, which we are experiencing right now. For many years psychologists have tried to impress on parents not to influence their children at all. This has left children with a vacuum and no direction in life. In a very practical way he explains that animals are normally born with most of their behavioral patterns set in a cast. People are different. They can only learn from adults entrusted to them. So abdicating on this responsibility is like opting for those figurative „Dead Man’s boots“ Nestor underlines: Without education people will become extinct! This topic is very close to the main thrust of our social mercy work in “Brücke” ([Die Brücke](#) is a project of the LKM and is financially supported by the LCMS in its endeavors to reach out to the people of Leipzig.)



Volunteers who help Rev. Gevers keep the doors of Die Bruecke open for the children. This includes providing food on Tuesdays throughout the year.

The children in an around “Brücke” generally have a roof over their heads. They normally also do not suffer from starvation. These children are poor because they do not have a trusting adult in their lives. Some of them have experienced different parent figures in the short span of their lives. The only thing they have learned, is that parents cannot be trusted at all. The result of this is that they not only have no parent figure, they also have a destroyed self-image. The co-workers in “Brücke” have discussed this issue at length. We posed the question: “Is it even possible to turn this negative cycle around?” Many institutions like the schools have just followed the pattern of the parents and have abdicated on their responsibility. We in “Brücke” have said NO! We cannot give up on any human being. Even grown-ups can learn that there is somebody who loves me unconditionally.

When Jesus gives us the parable of the lost son He explains exactly this: The son who finds himself among the pigs can find a way into the loving arms of the Father. He then makes the astounding discovery that his Father loves unconditionally. It is this unconditional love which we want to share with children and grown-ups alike. In “Brücke” we have weekly programs with kids. In our creative work we focus on their weak self image. The teaching goal is precisely this: “You are important because God says so!” Furthermore we also follow these teaching programs in our holiday programs. As the children are normally left to their own devices during school vacation, we open our doors on a daily basis during these times. Of course such work can only be done with a good team of volunteers. Recently we have been blessed by a very dedicated team. Pray that God will continue to bless all these efforts!

- [Learn more](#) about mercy work with [children](#) at Die Brücke.
- Pray for the school vacation programs which help to keep the children off of the streets.
- Pray for the continued ability to provide the children with meals.
- Pray that as Lukaskirche becomes the site for regular Divine Service for the congregation of [Sankt Trinitatisgemeinde](#), the children and their families would be brought into the fold of the church.