

Establishment of an Independent Parish in Geradstetten 1496

Two more documents from the 14th Century are meaningful for Geradstetten. They are concerned with the funding of an ongoing Mass in the chapel of Geradstetten by the Knight Bernold von Urbach. [The Mother church in nearby Winterbach no doubt responsible for this.] These documents date from July/August 1359 and [are not discussed here but] are written up in the *500 Year Anniversary of the Konrad Church*.

Presumably due to the strong population increase in the 15th Century, the desire [in Geradstetten] grew for independence in church affairs. This led to the decision to build the Konrad Church, which was finished in 1491.

Geradstetten then possessed its own church and everything that went along with this, but did not have its own pastor. The patron rights for this lay with the Duke of Württemberg, and the maintenance responsibilities with the town of Geradstetten, but the division from Winterbach had to be approved by the Bishop at Constance. So the Mayor and Town Council asked the Bishop at Constance for independence from Winterbach, *ain eigen pfarrkirchen zumachen* [to establish our own “pastor-church.”] in a letter dated 13 Dec. 1496.

The petitioners point out that they possessed a church building, with all that a pastor-church needed, cemetery, baptism font, sanctuary, and bell tower. The text of the document reads:

To the high honorable Princes and Lords, Lord Hugo, Bishop of Constance, his graces in spiritual matters, all vicars, we the mayor and the entire community of gerartstetten, we are your humble servants.

As we the village of gehartstetten belong the Bishop's parish in wintterbach, but are a long way from this parish church, and as we often, in thick and thin, in bad weather and in high water find the way to the church impassable, and likewise the pastor cannot visit us in times of utmost need to perform the Holy Rites for sick people. Therefore in the bad times the sick are not administered to and thus are harmed. Therefore and for other good reasons we took it upon ourselves to outfit the chapel in the village of Gerhartstetten with cemetery, baptism font, sanctuary hall, and bell tower and other needs of a pastor-church, and in honor of St. Konrad, we ask the Holy Bishop to establish for us our own pastor-church, and we seek the favor and support of the serene high born princes and lords, Lord Eberhart, Duke of wirtemberg and Teck, Count of Mümppegart, etc, our noble lord and prince, who is the patron of the pastor-church in wintterbach, to establish in our town a pastor with the living sinecure of revenue, tax, goods, and cash to set up complete with revenue and tax enough to enjoy, with the roofed chapel all outfitted, its contents and donation books open for inspection by our prince and lord who is the patron and can notarize the money, taxes, and other amenities with house, farm next to the aforementioned church a setting that the pastor will enjoy: Item land along with one farm yard belong to it generally bears 100 grain Masses [a unit of measure, 1.67 liter] with three kinds of grains. Item with 1 ½ Morgan [hectare] vineyard on the Ruffen, it lies on the herbsthalden [a village region], it is his own benefice and bears 20

pails annually. Item lying within a day's work on the nüwen herberg on the main road it earns yearly 2 pounds Heller. Item with a garden field in Stephan's herberg, giving yearly 8 schilling heller, Item with community bringing in annually 10 pounds, 20 schilling Heller Item with 20 Morgan pasture on the vith gassen, 3 pounds annually. Item with one morgan pasture on the new herberg named Hütwis, 2 pounds Heller annually Item with $\frac{3}{4}$ vineyard in the steinhalden giving in average years 3 pounds. And on the pastor-church in winterbach and our current pastor up to now we and our descendents promise 6 pounds heller annually, and thus with this change that our gracious Lord Duke Eberhard and his noble landed princely descendents for these this pastor-church is to be set up, and he will be the patron and lord and we wish also that your princely gracious commendable Constance agrees to allow us to separate from this pastor-church, and that your princely grace will answer our petition, and virtuously establish and attest to this new church as he had for other new churches. And to us and the village of gerhardstetten he separates our new church from the church in winterbach, installs a pastor here with the benefits and sinecures described, divided and separated according to the transfers, and together with the new revenues, authorizes, confirms, and attests also, apart from these things, to do everything that is required by law and custom to complete the transfer. On this we Eberhart Duke of wirttemberg and Teck, Count of mümpelgart etc are agreed to according as written, and with full knowledge and support. Therefore we have placed our seals on this letter. I conradus rosflow kirchherr of winterbach in full knowledge and support of the aforementioned separation and division and other matters announced, I have placed my seal on this letter. And so also we mayor, town council and entire town of gerhartstetten as we do not have our own seal, have asked the Overseer in Schorndorf Klausen Gaysberger to place his seal openly on this letter. This is done in Stuttgart on the Saint Lucien day of the Holy Junkfrowen after Christ, our dear Lord on the day as one counts Thousand Four hundred ninety and six years.

(3 seals)

To establish this agreement the petitioners led with the argument: the way to the church in Winterbach is impassable. From later reports we know the Rems River overflowed its banks frequently, up to 15 times a year, and therefore the way to Winterbach was blocked. The ministry of the pastor of the neighboring village was therefore not always guaranteed.

The new pastor naturally had to be taken care of by the town, just as the Winterbach Church needed to be compensated for a decline in its contributions.

The land providing for this (vineyards, pastures, fields) is exactly set down. In this connection names of regions appear that are still used today, such as *Rüffen, Stainhalden, Herbsthalden, Hütwis, Vithgassen, an der Landstrasse*. Along the way the yields of these real estate parcels are most exactly represented – one expects no less from these Schwabians.

Duke Eberhard II agreed to the establishment of Geradstetten's own pastorate, as well as the Schorndorf Overseer Klaus Gayssberger and the Pastor [Kirchherr] of Winterbach, a Conrad Rofloss. The parchment document carried the seal of these three, so it was prepared in the Duchy Chancellery in Stuttgart.

In only ten weeks the Bishop of Constance agreed to a pastorate in Geradstetten. The document exhibited here [pictured in the German publication] bears the signature of Johannes Fabbry, his *Generalvikar*.

A short description of those participating is in order:

Conradus Rofloss, Pastor of Winterbach. He must have been happy to know he was spared many difficult journeys to the sister village an hour away. As compensation the Geradstettener paid him 6 pounds Heller per year.

Eberhard II. Duke of Württemberg (1447-1504). He is happily overlooked in the historical writings. Because of his poor administrative abilities and mismanagement he was later deposed by King Maximilian.

Hugo von Hohenlandenberg, Bishop of Constance, Swiss nobleman from Winterthur. Accomplished humanist, he corresponded with Erasmus of Rotterdam....*ist ein schidlich feiner fürst gewesen, hat dem bistum wol gehauset* [was a most fine prince, and a diligent bishop].