



# Americans of Tübingen: *Katie*

“Well, by profession, I’m a teacher. I would describe myself as an artsy empath, culture lover, positive social critic, beginning gardener, and someone who appreciates emotional music with a good beat. I view life like art. I’ll turn a glorious cloudy sky into a watercolor painting in my mind and then flip it back again. I’m often just as content to appreciate the beauty and curiosity of the surroundings as to actually engage with them, which has definite pluses and minuses.

Ironically, one of my greatest joys is designing themed events that bring lots of people together – social art, the art of the moment and of appreciating it! My sisters and I grew up creating special dinners for our parents and friends – Louisa May Alcott, Little Women style. For a Narnia one, the guests had to walk through a wardrobe to get to dinner! Later, these themed dinners and surprises transformed somewhat into a love for planning student activities and school events.



During college in California, I used to sit on the bus listening to old German cassette tapes. German soon became a heart language to me. Prior to visiting Germany, as a nanny in the summer of 2008, I sensed that the course of my life was going to change – it was like a Matrix moment wherein I could choose the red or blue pill – and I had time to decide intentionally if I was going to go or not. Ultimately, I fell in love with Germany, its people, and cultures.

In 2011, I returned to Germany and spent several months at the Uni Tübi archives studying historical international student exchange programs between the USA and Germany. I was fascinated by the idea of the university as a site of cultural diplomacy and ended up writing a MA thesis on an iteration of the same topic: West German development aid contributions during the Cold War. Specifically, I examined the work of a foreign affairs committee at the University of Tübingen from 1960-1963. It was intriguing to read the original letters, newspaper articles, speeches, itineraries, meeting minutes, posters, and event invitations!

Most recently, after teaching in California for several years, I was praying one afternoon and saw an arrow in my heart pointing towards Germany. It was sort of like a pathway and my feet were on the tail-end. So, I decided to take the risk and move! It feels like I have stepped into my own life, for which I’m thankful! Currently, I teach English (surprise!) and geography at a local Sekundarschule and love the dynamic interchanges with students and their excitement for learning.

Tübingen is where the past meets the present. I sometimes sit on the church steps near the main square and think about all the people who have sat, walked, and talked there through the ages. Tübingen is a vibrant community, with an engaging student life, and people putting their potential into practice.... it is a place of movement. I do miss my family, California friends, dog, the beach, and ability to wear sporty pants (trousers) to the grocery store without anyone caring.

Who do I look up to? Corrie ten Boom – someone who risked her own comfort and convenience to treat others well. While I don’t think that I’m currently that great at risking my own comfort or convenience, it is a way of living that I want to emulate and practice more and more! L’Chaim – to life!”