

Mission at Nuremberg

Tim Townsend (HarperCollins)

Mission at Nuremberg tells the gripping true-life story of St. Louis Lutheran minister Henry Gerecke. In 1943 and at the age of 50, Gerecke told his wife he was enlisting as a U.S. Army chaplain. As two of his three sons faced danger and death on the battlefield during the height of World War II, Gerecke tended to 2,000 battered bodies and souls of wounded and dying GIs each month in the war hospitals just outside London.

Then, at the war's end, when other soldiers were going home, Gerecke was recruited for the most difficult job of his life: ministering to 21 Nazi leaders awaiting trial at Nuremberg.

Author Tim Townsend's book charts the complex relationships Gerecke developed with prominent Nazi leaders, including Hermann Goering, a leading member of the Nazi Party; Albert Speer, minister of armaments and war production for the Third Reich; Wilhelm Keitel, a general field marshal, second only to Adolf Hitler in Germany's military hierarchy; and Joachim von Ribbentrop, Nazi Germany's foreign minister. Townsend shares the stunning conversations and confessions shared among the former elite of the Third Reich as they neared the court's judgment and their executions.

Crafted from meticulous research and firsthand interviews with key individuals who were present at the trials, the book is a thought-provoking look at one of the most horrifying times in human history. Approaching the trial from a complex angle, Townsend probes difficult spiritual and ethical issues that continue to hold meaning and compels readers to rethink what they know about the power of forgiveness.

Townsend, a former religion reporter for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and three-time winner of the Reporter of the Year award by the Religion Newswriters Association, reveals that

Nuremberg chaplains like Gerecke “were not judging the members of their flocks, nor were they forgiving their crimes against humanity. Instead, they were trying to lead those Nazis who were willing to follow toward a deeper insight into what they had done.”