

Spring 2017

ecm outreach

newsletter of the european christian mission

www.ecmbritain.org

SURPRISE!



PROOF OF GOD AT WORK

Inside...

Stories from
Ukraine, Croatia,
Germany and
beyond



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WE WANT TO SEE...

more people reaching UP to receive Jesus' amazing love



more people reaching OUT to share Jesus' love with those in need



more people living IN caring communities that show Jesus' love



more organisations working TOGETHER to love Europe for Jesus

SURPRISE!

PROOF OF GOD AT WORK

From the British Director

Dear friends

A recent letter from Pete Greig, founder of the 24-7 Prayer movement, in Christianity magazine really inspired me. Here are a few excerpts:

"The Lord is doing a new thing among us...

"In London the Church has been growing faster than the population for several years. It's a remarkable answer to prayer and clear evidence that the tide is turning in our capital. Last time I preached at Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) I spoke at seven of ten (mostly) packed services across the two sites... The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) has planted 720 churches in 20 years from Newport in South Wales to Southend-on-Sea and they regularly gather 40,000 people to pray all night at London's Excel Centre.

"In Scotland, City Church, Aberdeen has grown so fast it now fills nine separate venues. In Northern Ireland, Causeway Coast Vineyard introduced 2,308 people to Jesus last year alone. They also served 13,752 meals to local families and mobilized 14,495 volunteer hours. Sixteen years ago theirs was a church of just six people. I could go on.

"...the Church is the primary agency of the kingdom of God.

"We fed 100,000 hungry families in the UK last year and provided the biggest network of debt counsellors by far. We run thousands of schools, clubs and hospices, more than 50 percent of all toddler and parent groups, and the majority of the nation's extracurricular youth work."

Thank you for the inspiration, Pete. If God can do this in the UK then he can do it in Slovenia, Poland, Bulgaria and beyond. I look forward to the day when I can share these kind of examples from across our continent.

Kent Anderson,
British Director

Visit our new and updated website to discover what's going on, where it's happening, latest opportunities and more!
Still at www.ecmbritain.org





Projects News

EUROPE IN FOCUS

A glimpse of God at work across Europe today

New Hope in Ukraine

Hope comes to people of all ages through the ministry of "New Hope Ukraine".

More than 100 foster children, orphans and parents came together for a week-long support camp in Dubechne.

Afterwards one participating family wrote: "Dear friends, we thank everyone so much who made this camp possible. Here we had interesting conversations, useful seminars, made new friends, enjoyed delicious food and wonderful rest. Thank you very much!"

300 young people attended a conference on sex and relationships in Odessa. "The conference was great!" says Sergiy Nosov. "The topic was so up-to-date, useful and interesting!!! Thank you so much for organizing this event!"

Seven youths who attend a weekly meeting for young people in Lviv have been baptised. One of them, Liana, said "If your goal was to show me God and His love for me, you've made it! You were not only telling me about God but trying to reflect Him. During the year of our friendship I was changing, and my life was changing too. I started to understand God much better. Many things in my life have changed. You've become my family!"



Set free and setting others free

Former convict Antonio Rodríguez Ortiz was awarded the Bronze Medal for Penitentiary Social Merit by a delegate of the Government of Spain in Andalusia on 23 September.

Antonio was sent to prison in the 1980s for armed robbery, drug trafficking and other

crimes. "I went so far as to use paper from the Gideon New Testaments

to smoke marijuana..." he says. But in prison Antonio heard the gospel for the first time and in February 1988 gave his life to Christ. Soon he was sharing Jesus with other prisoners.

"Ten years ago we tasked Antonio with developing teams for ministry in the 17 prisons in Andalusia, Spain," explains ECM's Spanish field leader Francis Arjona. "In 2006 there were only ten people doing prison ministry. Now it has reached all the prisons and around 3,200 prisoners each week. In the last ten years, 484 people have been baptised."



Thanks for all you've done!

Fabiano and Suzana Fernandez have been a valued part of ECM's team in Portugal since 1988. But it's time for a change...

"Fabiano and Suzana Fernandez were vital contributors to the successful development of ECM Portugal as well as being involved in local church planting ministries and PBI (the Portuguese Bible Institute) responsibilities," says ECM's International Director Chris Wigram. "They have set a great foundation for their future ministry outside of ECM and we appreciate their continued prayer for ECM across the continent."

For 28 years Fabiano and Suzana have served in numerous ministry projects, including a church planting project in Park of the Nations, Lisbon, and several years as the Portuguese Field leader. In recent years Fabiano has been Principal of PBI in Lisbon as well as setting up a Master's programme offering training in Portugal, Mozambique and Angola.

However Fabiano and Suzana now feel that relinquishing some commitments is necessary and will be leaving ECM to focus on PBI. We want to thank them for their faithful, vibrant service and wish them every blessing for the future.



NewsBite

Brexit impact: A giant thank you to everyone who responded to our Brexit impact appeal! Your generosity will help keep ECM workers whose support has decreased due to the drop in the value of the pound versus the euro in Europe. But this challenge has also encouraged local innovation. Andy Warner in Castellón, Spain, has begun teaching conversational English in a local school to 10-18 year olds. This both fills the financial gap and opens the doors to new relationships.

Mayor funds work in Slovenia:

Support for a kid's camp run by Sebastian and Glorija Forjan came from an unusual source. They explain, "45 children came to enjoy Bible stories, games, and other great activities. Because we work closely with the mayor's office, God opened the door and they paid for all the kids to come to camp



for free. Our God is BIG! Many children didn't want to go home when their parents came to pick them up afterwards."

With the Lord: Long-standing ECM supporter and volunteer Barrie Thompson died suddenly at his home in Hoylake on the Wirral in December. ECM remembers with deep thankfulness his years of faithfulness in reaching out to Hungarian students in the UK, as well as many trips to Hungary to assist Margaret Willan with student camps in Bodrog and Balatonszemes. We are praying for his family as Barrie's death has come as a great shock to the many for whom he did so much throughout his life.



Missionary focus

SUCCESS LEADS TO SUCCESS!

Yet ANOTHER church plant in France

In past issues of ECM Outreach we have told you about how the church in Veneux-les Sablons, headed up by Stephen and Rosemary Cox, had outgrown its building. And how this had led to a church plant down the road in Donnemarie. Well, the story continues...

"The church plant in Donnemarie continues to amaze us," Stephen explained early in September. "The prayers of some of the teenagers at a recent meeting were remarkable in their simple sincerity, their freshness and their faith. There was such life in them. One of the lads invited Christ into his life last weekend. As from September we will be holding weekly Sunday services in Donnemarie."

Later in September Stephen wrote, "Since the 11th they have been holding weekly Sunday services in a well-adapted modern building that they rent for the weekends. The 18th saw their first baptism, Nicole. Another is planned for October. Regular attendance is about 50. The monthly Café-croissant-Bible studies are continuing."

A church needs a leader and the couple behind this new church plant are members of Stephen



and Rosemary's church, Philippe and Joanne Mayhew. They are an experienced missionary couple who have worked with Child Evangelism in France (CEF) for 20 years. They have just joined ECM in order to focus on church planting.

The new church plant belongs to the French Baptist Association, the same church movement as the Veneux church. It is great to welcome another couple to ECM's team in France, especially as they are already well on their way to success!

By the way, back at Veneux Stephen says, "We have moved to having two identical church services every Sunday in an effort to ensure that the growth of the church is not hindered by lack of space. We are still in the trial period; we haven't yet resolved all the difficulties, but we're working on it."



Insights from the road

EUROPE'S PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

During October Jim and Christine Memory spent 18 days travelling 3758 miles through 16 European countries. Here are a few of their thoughts.

History

Any trip in Europe makes you aware of its torturous history. Our first day took us through Flanders where every few kilometers there is a war cemetery and, one hundred years later, farmers are still digging up WWI ammunition. Later, on our drive from the Czech Republic to Poland, we passed through the little town of Oswiecim, better known by its German name of Auschwitz. The horrors committed there cast a shadow over the town, and our continent, to this day.

Insight: Our trip impressed on us that all mission in Europe takes place in a context that is marked by history. Even as we focus on planting tomorrow's churches today we must equip our workers with the tools to understand their historical context and operate accordingly.

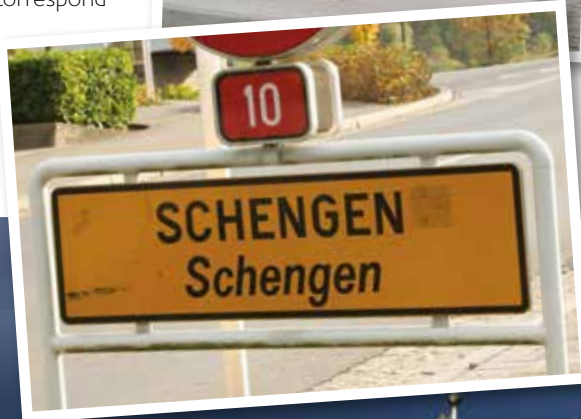


Borders

We crossed national borders on 23 occasions but thanks to the Schengen Area only had to show our passport four times (two of those were getting in and out of the UK!). While this creates the illusion of a border-free Europe, where national distinctions mean very little, one of the clearest impressions during our trip was of the enduring cultural, linguistic, architectural and culinary borders of Europe.

But these borders don't necessarily correspond to national borders. Over and over again, in Belgium, Poland, Hungary, Italy and the Alsace we came across regions where the culture, language, architecture and food established a sense of identity and belonging which did not correspond to the borders on the map.

Insight: Understanding cultural issues is essential to understanding how to engage in mission in Europe today.



Nationalism

We saw evidence of rising nationalism in a number of the countries we visited. Posters for Austrian nationalist presidential hopeful Norbert Hofer, "Österreich Braucht Sicherheit" (Austria needs security) were everywhere. In Hungary we arrived just a few days after the referendum on European Commission proposals to redistribute asylum seekers more evenly across the EU but messages were still prominently displayed on buildings across the country: Ne Kockáztassunk (No risks) Szavazzunk Nemmel (Vote No).

Insight: Nationalism is a complex issue, but our primary allegiance as Christians must ultimately be to Christ. Mission in tomorrow's Europe may involve us speaking prophetically into the increasingly nationalist public arena to remind Europeans of that.



Migration

Migration is also a complex issue. This was most clearly illustrated by the opportunity we had to contribute to a mission conference

being held in Karlsruhe, Germany by a network of Spanish-speaking migrant congregations. These churches are mostly comprised of Latin American young adults but in the best cases they have formed mutually beneficial

relationships with German congregations. Sri Lankan ECM worker Vimal spoke at the conference about his refugee ministry, yet even among those who work with refugees, there are significant tensions. Not all refugees are genuine. And Muslim immigration is a particularly sensitive issue in many countries.

Insight: Today's Europeans often have a migrant story in their recent past and this will affect the way we do our evangelism, discipleship and church planting.



Church

We observed in many places the enduring presence and influence of Christian churches across Europe. While secularisation has had a devastating effect on church attendance, churches continue to play a central part in the life of many European communities.

We saw many exciting signs of life: the vibrancy of international churches in Karlsruhe, Germany and in Austria; new church plants in Poland; a beautiful new church in the outskirts of Budapest which is reaching out to the youth in its district; the long term commitment of Christian young people from different Austrian churches in Villach to the Teabus that is placed in the centre of the town 12 times a year; residential Christian communities in Maastricht, Netherlands...

Insight: Noticeable in these was the prominence of younger leaders, many of whom were very keen to talk and to be mentored.



The church continues to be God's principal instrument to reach today's Europeans and ECM has a part in that

Partnership

As we travelled we met with ECM colleagues but also with workers from other agencies and churches. We met financial supporters. We met with representatives of partner agencies like Liebenzeller Mission in Germany. And at the church in Karlsruhe, we met with some who had participated actively in outreaches with us in Montilla when we were working in Spain. In Budapest we stayed with a young couple who had been on an ECM church planting course in Madrid.

Insight: ECM's story has been one of partnership. Working together is one of our values. We are well placed to make more of this but need to equip and train our workers to do this better than we do at present.

One last thought

It was a huge privilege to take this trip, to see close-up some of the tremendous challenges of mission in Europe today, and to meet ECM colleagues who are facing those challenges with inspiring faith and missional creativity. We are more convinced than ever that God is "on the move" in Europe, that the gospel continues to be "good news" for today's Europeans, and that ECM has a small, but vital, part in "sharing Christ's love in Europe".

TOO EXCITED TO SLEEP

Reflections of a senior church planter

It's almost midnight. I should go to bed because I have to preach tomorrow, but I'm sure I won't sleep. The experience tonight was too powerful. What happened?

In 2011 three Brazilians visited Croatia, where they heard God's calling. The next year all three returned for a two year project supporting local pastors: a young man and woman in their early 20's and a lady of 40, named Carla. **Within three years 16 people had come to faith in Christ through the ministry of this small team!**

Tonight we (a group of 22 Brazilians, two Ukrainians, and a few people from Western Europe) are visiting Varaždin for an evening of testimonies. Jonathan Vukov, the local Croatian pastor, compared the spiritual poverty in his country to spiritual blessings in Brazil. In Croatia 0.2% of the population confesses to knowing Jesus, while in Brazil that number is over 40%.

Next Carla spoke. **And then it happened.** She called five Croatian young people forward who came to know the Lord in these last few years. Many others have become Christians, but **these five are all in training for the ministry!** They shared how God had called them and then some of the Brazilians prayed for them, one by one.

But the evening did not stop there. This was followed by a call: "Who wants to stand up and be available to follow the example of these five? To go wherever it might be that God calls you to serve, but to consider the Balkans?" There was



personal prayer for each who came forward in that small church.

Then the rest of us were asked to pray for them all together at the same time. It was a noisy, happy time with a lot of tears – some of pure emotion, some of regret of passed things or a delay in a calling, some of expectation for what God might still have in mind.

Now I sit here and the emotions are slowly ebbing away. I want to share this with you and say from the bottom of my heart: Thank you for praying for the efforts in the Balkans. The result is so rewarding that one of the partakers from England said, "Is this the beginning of revival in the Balkans?"

Written by Johan Lukasse on October 2016

To make a gift so ministry across Europe can continue please use the enclosed response form

Special focus

LIFE, DEATH AND BALLOONS

Every ministry has a beginning and an end

For more than 10 years David and Linda James have taken international summer mission teams to the seaside resort of Umag, Croatia. Over the last two years they've had contact with Maurizio – and his story is a beautiful picture of God at work.

"In 2015 we arrived in Umag with a young international team and the teabus (a mobile café)." David explains, "ready to help the local church share the love of Christ with both residents and holiday makers. On the very first evening we met a man named Maurizio who was selling balloons along the promenade. On the surface he seemed larger than life, if at times a little drunk. This 'balloon man' appeared each of the following two evenings, but on the fourth he was nowhere to be seen.



"Instead Maurizio was at home, contemplating suicide. At one point he even had a noose around his neck. Maurizio was an alcoholic and suffered from various other health issues and had had enough. But something told him not to end his life; that he should go to talk to the teabus people one more time. Josip Cukic, pastor of the Umag church, had a long discussion with him and invited Maurizio and his wife Ruza to meet with him and his wife Sofija regularly to read the Bible and pray.

"A number of weeks later Maurizio trusted his life to Jesus.

"When we arrived on the promenade in Umag a year later, Maurizio came straight up to me and said 'Thanks to you and your team for coming to Umag with this bus. Last year I have received new life!' Because Maurizio had spent much of

his life in the local bars he had many friends to tell about Jesus, and he did so with gusto. In fact he was the first person born and raised in Umag to become a Christian in the local church – so he was very special in the eyes of Pastor Cukic.

"A month after our 2016 mission trip, the Umag church held an evangelistic event during which Ruza also gave her life to the Lord. Maurizio's heart simply overflowed with joy.

"One week later Maurizio, aged just 42, died suddenly. Everyone was in shock – especially Pastor Cukic. He had hoped that this was the start of a breakthrough for the church. Their locally born natural evangelist was gone."

Pastor Cukic continues the story: "To our surprise Ruza decided she wanted our church to conduct the funeral – even though her conversion was only a week earlier and Maurizio's family were all Roman Catholic. So we took on this responsibility. Umag had never seen an event like it. I was able to preach to hundreds of local people. Sofija and I could speak to his mother and many others about the hope that Maurizio had. They were especially struck by a photo I had taken of Maurizio immediately after his conversion. Everyone who looked at this photo said they had never known Maurizio like that.

"The next Sunday six of Maurizio's friends came to our Sunday service. Ruza is experiencing a comfort that many can only describe as supernatural. Maurizio's mother insisted that the name of our church should be included in the obituary. Such an opportunity for the church to present itself in this way could only come from our faithful Lord.

"Despite the sadness, we are encouraged. Pray for Ruza and Maurizio's friends and relatives – who now know where to find hope."





THROUGH BRITISH EYES

Thoughts of a short-termer

British short-termer David James (a different person than in the last article despite the same name) visited a project in Schwerin, Germany.

"Since returning home I have been reflecting on my visit and what it means to 'Go and teach all nations the gospel,' explains David. "What does this mean in practice in a largely atheist culture in an area with huge social problems?

"I believe that before you can properly communicate the message of hope contained in the gospel you have to identify with the people and obtain their trust. That means moving into a community and living in close proximity with those you want to reach. This is what Christiaan and Ksenia Kooiman have been doing in Schwerin for the past six years.

"Once a month they stage a well-attended outside music and food festival which is a wonderful opportunity to talk to people about Jesus, nearly all of whom are non-believers.

They also organize a monthly children's festival. The one I attended incorporated a treasure hunt based on the Parable of the Talents.

"While there I was involved in children's ministry where we played board games and outside sports with many who came from broken homes. I also helped distribute food donated by a local supermarket to around 260 people. This too was a great opportunity to build relationships and speak of Jesus. On several occasions we visited Syrian and Afghan refugees where we gave out Arabic Bibles. Since returning I've heard that three of the people we visited have joined a Bible study course run by a Muslim convert!

"The local team is renovating a long-time vacant 'useless' hall that can serve as a powerful symbol of hope for the long term unemployed who often feel unneeded. It is intended as a way of bringing the good news very close to the people so that Jesus can be discovered at each person's own tempo."



SHORT TERM OPPORTUNITIES

Be part of what God is doing in Europe!

■ Church planting internships in

Austria: Location: various. Offering a wide range of ministries within and outside the church. Basic German required. One year or longer.

■ **Teaching English in Poland:** Location: Rabka. Join the English Point Language Centre started by the Rabka Baptist Church, which serves some 40 students aged 5-65.

■ **Monitor in Spanish drug rehabilitation centre:** Location: Pozoblanco. Experience in building or other practical professions helpful. Two years or longer.

■ **Worship leader and youth-worker in Belgium:** Two different opportunities to support the growth of a church plant. Dutch required. One year or longer.

■ **Church planters / evangelists in Croatia:** 20/30s, ideally single, to work in teams of 4. Language learning required. Two years or longer.



Find out more about these and other exciting possibilities on our website.

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