

Dear Praying Friend,

I was sitting in a meeting about 3 weeks ago when I received a text message from a number I did not recognize. S (who texted like we were continuing a conversation) needed some advice. Her ex-boyfriend, C, was distraught and threatening to harm himself. I guessed who it was (incorrectly) and texted back. After some initial confusion involving another couple of texts, I finally figured out who it was. The short version of this story is that Lynette and I had a long conversation with S, helping her get a new start with Christ. The following day, C and I ended up in a face-to-face conversation about dying to everything else but Christ. A few hours later I received another text. C now wants to follow Jesus. Fast forward two weeks – I sat with C in our church’s “upper room.” We talked about the journey and the struggles; we read the Scriptures and prayed together. Something happened to C. He was no longer depressed, but engaged, eager, pressing into truth. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” (2. Cor. 5:17)

Since we last wrote to you at the end of November much has happened. December was particularly crazy busy with travel in my regional leader role over central Europe.

- December 4-5: We held our first strategic planning retreat in Budapest for GEM’s new Hungarian field.
- December 13-15: Lynette and I participated in the Romania field retreat in Sibiu.
- December 23: I preached on Christmas Sunday in the Kagan church.
- December 27 to January 2: We drove to Zurich, Switzerland, after Christmas to meet up with our GEM colleague, Kevin Flierl, catching a glimpse of his significant ministry in music and mentoring among the Swiss. On that trip, I was also able to interview two more Austrian church leaders for the BAO project (dissertation research).

Thank you for praying for us through these many travels. January has been less hectic as we returned to a more “normal” schedule focusing on local ministry with “only” one week away from home for 6 full days of GEM leaders meetings in Rome. (That was a great week in which I saw God at work among us in a number of ways. It is a great privilege to work with my colleagues on the Europe Leadership Team.)

Here are a few things that you can be praying for in the weeks ahead:

- We will have 5 sets of guests over the next four weeks, all of them GEM colleagues coming to Vienna on mission business. We love this, but it sometimes means less time for other things.
- Jim has two trips coming up: one to the Czech Republic and another to Berlin, both of them to meet with the field leaders of those two GEM fields.
- I would also ask you to pray for two particularly sticky leadership issues I am wrestling with in the central region, which I cannot explain here, but which call for God’s clear leading and supernatural wisdom. Please pray for me and my colleagues who are with me in these trenches. The enemy loves to divide and discourage, but the desire of our hearts is to see God glorified, His Kingdom built, and His people flourish. We are acutely aware that we are facing spiritual warfare and need your prayers.

- Another item for your earnest prayer is for Kristiana and Cory and our two precious granddaughters. They just received notice from Ireland that their applications for visas were denied. They are appealing that decision. They are currently settling in for the next 4-5 months in Wheaton, IL, surrounded by the care of wonderful folks at College Church. Rylynn is attending a local public kindergarten. Yet their future is uncertain. Thanks for praying.

As I write this letter, Lynette is leading an international women's Bible study, teaching on Isaiah; our first in a long line of guests will be arriving this afternoon; and I am getting ready for an important meeting tomorrow in the Czech Republic. You, my dear friends, are our lifeline. Your friendship, your financial support, and especially your prayers sustain us. Thank you for partnering with us. May the Lord richly bless you.

In Christ,

Jim and Lynette

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Jim with some members of the Romanian Team