

Dear praying friends,

What is God's purpose for His people? Our church here in Vienna has been going through some rough waters lately. A few weeks ago we had an opportunity to come together as a church family and talk about some issues around tables. I happened to join a table discussing the vision of the church, and next to me was "J", who is in our small discipleship group. "J" is on a journey of faith and comes from a devoutly Roman Catholic family. He married a girl from our church not long ago and they both joined our little group this year at the invitation of A&F, whom we have mentioned in the past. For the past few months, we have been reading 1st Peter together. Anyhow, our table leader had us read some passages of Scripture and asked us what we thought God's vision was for the church. "J" spoke up and said that he had another verse he wanted to read that might help. It was 1st Peter 2:9, where the people of God are described as a royal priesthood. "J" went on to say that he had come to see that in contrast to his upbringing, the Bible taught that we were all priests. So maybe the vision of the church should be for all of us to bring God's Word to others, that they might also follow Christ, and the church would grow. Wow!

As this story illustrates, in spite of many challenges, God is at work, speaking into and transforming lives. "J" reminded me that this business of making disciples is too important to be left to the professionals!

Thank you for your prayers for us. Please be praying for our church as we have a congregational meeting on Sunday and will soon begin a year without the pastor, who is taking an educational sabbatical. Pray with us for our partly new leadership team (if the two nominated to be elders are confirmed on Sunday), for unity, wisdom, and grace.

The month of October included several ministry trips, including one to southern Romania to visit with our GEM Romania team, their new field leader, and to see one of the pioneering ministries we are partnering with in one of Romania's least reached, and poorest, parts of the country. We were only an hour north of the Bulgarian border in a town dominated by mafia-like corruption. Yet God is building his church there and in neighboring villages, as well. We would love to grow our team in Romania where both needs and opportunities abound. I was also in Budapest recently meeting with a young British man, who along with his Hungarian wife and young daughter are moving to the hinterlands of eastern Hungary and want to plant a church there. We have been praying for some time that the Lord would send us people who are passionate for the Gospel and have a pioneering spirit to launch new ministry in these difficult mission fields. Could this young couple be the beginning of God's answer?

Some of you may be wondering about our BAO ministry, which doesn't show up in our updates very often. The reason for this is because I (Jim) have not been able to teach any BAO courses for the last bit due to my regional mission leadership responsibilities. At the same time, however, I have been engaged in a critical project on BAO's behalf. For my doctoral studies, I have been digging into the history and contribution of BAO to Austria's evangelical movement over the past 35 years. This research has given me numerous opportunities to interview key people in Austria. This week I interviewed both

BAO's founder, Willi Giefing, and retired judge, Dr. Fritz Lippert, the architect of Austria's association of evangelical churches (called the ARGEGÖ), which came into being at the very beginning of the 1980s. Their amazing stories are an inspiration to all of us. While we rejoice in all that God has done over these years, our urgent prayer is for the next generation of Austrians who are following in their footsteps.

Prayer summary:

- For the Kagran Church, current challenges and start of a new chapter
- For Lynette and me as we lead and mentor others (currently helping with three small groups, and doing one-on-one mentoring)
- For my GEM regional responsibilities, esp. for new workers for Hungary and Romania (and, as ever, Austria!!)
- For my research on BAO

Lynette and I wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving.
Gratefully,

Jim and Lynette

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