

Dear praying friends,

Little things that God does can take the gloom and fill our hearts with unexpected joy. That happened two days ago, while Lynette and I were taking a walk (a daily event for Lynette, who has been walking many miles every day since her bout with cancer 2 and a half years ago). As we were passing our neighbor's house, S, our atheist friend for whom you may have prayed since our last update, was out in her front garden and we stopped to chat. She surprised us when she said she very much hoped we would never move, because when her husband dies (he is 15 yrs. or so her senior, but in no danger of passing on, as far as we know) – anyway, when he does pass away, she told us, we are all she has left. Of course, this is nothing to rejoice about. But somewhere along the way, God has opened her heart toward us. And that made our hearts skip a beat. The Holy Spirit is working. Please pray for S and her husband F.

Last month I shared with you about my GEM colleague Kevin's visit to Vienna, including the video he made with me on the topic of evangelism. (That trip was in mid-August, but seems like a life-time ago.) In spite of the teasing I am bound to get, I am sharing part two with you this month. This one is on disciple making.



GEM's director of member care recently reported to our leadership team that everywhere he looks, within the GEM community and in the general populace, a low-grade kind of depression, a sense of malaise, has cast a long shadow. I sense this in our church, in my neighborhood, among my colleagues, and even, if I were honest, in myself at times. It has been nearly a year since we physically saw any of our families in person, and nearly three years since we have been able to travel in the US and see the rest of you. Today would have been the day we returned to Vienna after 9 weeks in the US, but we had to postpone that trip until next Feb/March, and those dates also seem uncertain now. Kristiana and Cory and those precious granddaughters

are still “stuck” in Illinois, while Europe tightens, rather than loosens, it’s restrictions. Because of my regional leadership responsibilities with GEM, I am usually traveling a few days each month, but that has completely vanished. I recently had to cancel one of my more important annual events: a weekend retreat with my team of field leaders, who are scattered throughout the region, in Romania, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Austria, and Germany – none of them currently free to travel. I know you all understand how frustrating this is, and how it weighs heavily on the spirit. (On top of these, we lost a dear friend and GEM colleague, Suzy Penner, to cancer this past month. She was a mom with two teenagers, both with disabilities. It has been heartbreaking.) In the midst of all of these things, however, we do not lose heart (cf. 2. Cor. 4,16ff). We are not alone. God walks with us through every valley – indeed, we have so much to be thankful for.

In addition to days filled with virtual meetings, my BAO research and writing project, teaching prep, etc. – all while facing a flat screen, we are thankfully still able to have some face-to-face ministry. Yesterday, I (Jim) had two one-on-one appointments, tonight we are studying John 10 with our discipleship group, tomorrow Lynette teaches on Daniel, and on Sunday, I am preaching in our church on the last part of John 8 (that is assuming we are allowed to hold worship services). These are some of the things which keep us focused on the reason God has called us to serve Him in Austria.

Thank you all for your prayers and friendship. You are a life-line for us. This time of testing is all part of God’s transforming process (James 1:2-4 and 1. Peter 1:6-7). Peter reminds us that this too will result in “praise, glory, and honor.” Now that is something to rejoice about!

God bless and keep you all,

Jim and Lynette

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