

PALSROKS' POSTINGS



May, 2011

Spring in Europe

There was snow on the ground when we left Michigan in April, and spring was just beginning in St. Petersburg. But the new life was not only springing up from the ground; it was also on display in the 4 ex-addicts that went out on the street to corner people with their evangelistic fervor and message. While not a method with which I am comfortable, because they had been grabbed by God when they were on the bottom, these evangelists knew that many of their fellow Russians needed a compassionate confrontation. So they went up to people with jolting questions, trying to get them to converse and perhaps be willing to listen to the gospel and join in a Bible study. These Pentecostal new believers are starting churches which are growing. Gary and Galya Timmerman are encouraging and guiding these church planters.

By the time we got to Sarospatak, Hungary the trees were budding and the grass was green. About 20 years ago, CRWM went to the seminary here to assist with the church which had been so scared by communism. Frank Sawyer has trained many pastors who are now filling the leadership gap. However the young pastors talked about the weeds in their garden- suspicion and bitterness still rooted in the church from people who collaborated with their communists' oppressors. They also spoke of how the church has lost sight of Christ, gotten caught in bureaucracy, and apathy. The church needs pruning so that she can stay connected to the vine. But Frank has faithfully nurtured not only pastors but also 2 of his students- one now with a doctor's degree and the other with 2 Masters- and they are professors with him.

Arpy, a friend of missionary George de Vuyst in Ukraine, lives with his wife and five children out in the country side. His intention was to open an orphanage but he ran into ecclesiastical and governmental road blocks. So now he simply wants to become a foster home for 5 more kids. They would grow much of their own food- already he had planted his garden, got irrigation to his field, and planted seeds in his green house. And he has built his own home. He is asking George to help him grow and to encourage him. Just a few months before we arrived, he wanted to give up or else "smash a few heads" but through support and prayer of George and Sarah, Arpy is working again in his fields.

Although the coal mines have spread dust throughout Lupeni, Romania the sky was bright blue and the mountains around will bursting with color. Steve and Jan Michmerhuizen were also bursting with enthusiasm. Only a short time into their first term, they had plowed through language training such that Steve could communicate very well. He knew people not only in the poverty-stricken town but throughout the country. At the Baptist Church he leaned over to talk with the pastor, and before I knew it, I was preaching in the 2 hour service. He gets things done! There are over 1000 youth being cultivated by the New Horizon youth ministry with the dream that a new society can spring up from them and the brokenness of the past can be set aside. Steve wants to follow God in transforming not just the town but the nation.

Many European Christians see themselves as a remnant; while there are large cathedrals, most are empty; society is quite secular; Christians are now a small group. In the midst of Vienna, Austria there is an International Christian School that used to focus on missionary children. Now most missionaries are gone. But families are coming to the school because they want to be a part of a Christian community and they want their children to grow in Christian soil. Jeff and Lisa Schra, previously a Calvin College event director and a Christian School development associate, are assisting the school to increase its capacity to do ministry and to build a sustainable future. The kids were as beautiful as the city with its palaces and parks.

Finally we made it to Amsterdam. Most of the tulips had already drooped. But Harold Kallemeyn's plans for a European board to guide and support Timothy Leadership Training in Europe were in full bloom. Now there are 4 Dutch folks willing to give their time and funds and leadership to help train pastors and laity in the ministry. He listed 45 countries in Europe where he wants TLT and CRWM to spread. Large field, potentially great harvest; do we have the workers?

It was my pleasure to provide a little loving fertilizer this spring in these various fields. Thanks for your support!



Russ and Sherry Palsrok