



# Keeping In Contact

News from Kontaktmission USA

June 2003

## Size of Job: Priority: **Huge!** Priority: **Highest!**

I have recently had the opportunity to teach a class for our local church on the *missions mandate* – the biblical basis for the Christian’s and the church’s involvement in missions. The preparation for this class and for some recent messages has given me an opportunity to reaffirm in my own thinking some things I believe strongly about this thing we call “missions”. I am reminded of the thoughts and resulting feelings that “got us going” when we went to serve as missionaries for the first time.

I believe that Jesus meant what he said in Matthew 28:18-20 when he stressed, as he did before no other statement he made, that *all authority* had been given unto him to issue the Great Commission – which is a command – in the strongest, clearest possible language. I believe that *going, baptizing, and teaching* to obey Jesus’ commands are part of the command to *make disciples of all nations*. I believe that this, along with Acts 1:8 (also about missions), represents the final, urgent wish of our departing Lord. Think about it: *Jesus’ teachings on missions were his final words and were utterly clear ...and so they naturally ought to be given the highest conceivable priority* in our Christian lives and in the church’s planning. I can’t read it any other way.

I also believe that missions is primarily *about evangelism*, and that Jesus (not humanitarian acts of kindness alone) represents the one and only hope for a human life, as he himself taught in John 14:6. I believe the Church alone – not President Bush’s AIDS plan nor our military’s expulsion of evil dictators – can give the world this ultimate hope. And I believe that there is still an enormous amount of missions work to be done before we can claim completion of our purpose of evangelizing the world, as evidenced by the establishment of healthy churches of disciples of Jesus in every people group on the planet. The job is truly still huge. I can’t read it any other way.

Do you share these convictions? Then be personally involved in missions. Support, pray for, and actively help send missionaries, and go if you can. I won’t say please because it’s not me asking!

## News from all over

**Dieter Trefz, European Director, Wüstenrot, Germany** I led training sessions with our Romanian workers on location in Romania the last week of May and first week of June. Pray for continued excellence and growth of the churches there.

**Gitta Weise, church-planting, Jerusalem, Israel!** The terror attacks continue to affect our daily lives. One of our church members was recently killed in an attack, which amazingly led to a powerful witness to the entire Israeli family and many in the community. We praise God for this, and for the rains which have finally refilled our only fresh water supply.

**Artur & Irene Schmidt, Lithuania team leader, Kaunas, Lithuania** We are celebrating the baptism of Laima and Tadas, an impor-  
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## News from all over

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tant occasion for the church as well as for them. We are also praying for a positive result from a May meeting of the various small churches in our city.

**Friedhelm & Antonia Niethammer, church-planting, Wolfsberg, Austria** We began our middle-school age group in May. Please pray that the children will invite their friends from school and their neighborhoods, and that this work will be effective.

**Christian & Andrea Hartmann, church-planting, Terlan, Italy** A recent crusade meeting has led to four decisions for Christ, for which we are glad to be able to do the follow-up. Please pray for these 4 and that others will join them for an Intro to Faith course. Also pray for our new work with the church in Bozen.

**Eduard & Anke Stepankin, Oleg & Susanna Schmidt, church-planting, Novosibirsk, Russia** We are thankful to God that we can now hold our Sunday services in a new meeting place! A proper meeting place is essential to effective work in Russia.

**Bible school faculty, Kremenchuk, Ukraine** We had many difficulties obtaining visas for 3 of our teachers to travel to hold summer courses at the new (Russian-language) Bible school in Berlin, but praise God, we were finally able to obtain them.

**Mark & Corinne Wilson, candidates, Germany** We mentioned in the last newsletter that Mark and Corinne were entering their candidate phase with Kontaktmission. After attending the annual meetings and getting to know the leadership team, they are now planning and working toward arriving in Germany next summer.

**Stas Cherneyev, Rakovka, Ukraine** The new Rakovka congregation has just acquired an old building which will be renovated as a meeting place. (Also praise God that an American church from Grove, Oklahoma has committed to sponsor Stas' salary as a church planter!)

## Finally, a woman's perspective

by Carla Harris

Since returning to the U.S. from Germany in 1999, I've jealously said goodbye to my darling husband at least a half dozen times as he headed back to the Vaterland to attend Kontaktmission meetings and visit the churches we helped to establish. For various reasons, the children and I could never go along, until this April! We spent one week in northern Germany visiting many dear friends, eating way too much but loving every minute of it, and letting the kids gather an embarrassing amount of Easter chocolate, ...but the second week was the real reason for our trip.

If you have followed our Kontaktmission newsletters for very long, you have read all sorts of strange sounding names of people who live in far away places, and who are reportedly serving the same Lord and doing the same kind of evangelism work that you read about in your Bible and hear



about in your church. Maybe they don't seem quite real because you can't put faces with their names. I admit I felt a little that way too about many of the Kontaktmission missionaries. I had met a few, but many were only names on a paper or a faceless person to whom I forwarded a support check. Rob, on the other hand, was old friends with most. Attending this year's Kontaktmission *Missionstreffen* and *Mitarbeitertagung* changed all that!

The *Missionstreffen* (all-mission meeting) is held each spring. It's a special Sunday when all the churches and supporters of Kontaktmission are invited to meet the KM missionaries and recruits, hear reports of what they are doing and listen to special speakers and music. In short, it is a day of encouraging, sharing and rejoicing in what the Lord has done, and hopefully motivating others to join the effort. This year set a new attendance record of around 700.

The next few days after the *Missionstreffen* is the *Mitarbeitertagung* (lit. worker meeting), basically a training retreat for missionaries and recruits. This year, the theme was the family, and missionaries were encouraged to bring their wives and children. A Belgian church planter and past director of the primary Belgian church planting agency, Johan Lukasse, led sessions

relating to the family on the mission field. Johan, a native Flemish speaker, taught in English, was translated for the big group into German, then again at the back of the room into Russian and sometimes other languages. These are the challenges of a multinational organization! The children were kept busy with their own program and the adults had lots of opportunities for workshops, meetings, and just talking with each other. Rob, who had helped plan the week, led the worship sessions and taught a workshop.

Hanging out between sessions at the playground with the kids was a great way to meet other wives. I got to know Irene from Lithuania, Sophie from Austria, Marion from Spain, and did my best to talk to Olga who only spoke Russian with a few words of German. Our 4 yr old Alissa, however, had no trouble with her 18 mo. old Julia! I got to renew friendships with another Olga, now in Russia, and meet her new baby, as well as with Katharina, who was in Ukraine but is now back in Germany, and share experiences with Karin, the wife of the

KM executive director, plus many others (including many of their other halves!).

Even though we communicated in various languages and dialects (almost everyone is bilingual, some more) and come from and live in vastly different settings, the similarities are unmistakable. Everyone has a heart for missions, that people would come to know the saving grace of Jesus. Everyone works in situations that are less than ideal: sometimes among people that have no interest or understanding of the Gospel, often far from families and native culture, all relying on God for the finances they need when there just doesn't seem to be a way, some dealing with the stresses of rapidly growing churches while others work for years for one convert. But all are doing great work and trusting the Lord for the fruit. All these men and women love the same God we do, and at the core aren't that different from us ...so don't let the names fool you, I can vouch for the fact that they go with real faces, real people. And now I'm even more proud to be a part of this team.

## Percentages of Evangelical Christians in Western Europe

For statistical purposes, evangelical Christians are sometimes counted as those who believe, and attend churches who teach that, "You must be born again." In other words, these are Bible-believing Christians who have experienced a believer's conversion, and not those who were "born into" a church membership, such as in the state churches in most of western Europe. Here is a chart of the percentages of evangelicals in some of the countries of Europe. All of these figures represent sad conditions, some are just worse than others. Remember, 0.4%, a common figure in this chart, equals *four tenths of one percent*, or four per thousand.

(These statistics and more like them are available from the excellent book, *Operation World, 21st Century Edition*, by Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk.)

Country	% evangelical Christian	% annual growth/decline
Austria +	0.4%	1.3%
Belgium +	1.1%	2.8%
Denmark	4.8%	-6.0%
France	0.8%	5.7%
Germany +	2.9%*	2.1%*
Greece +	0.4%	7.6%
Italy +	0.9%	3.4%
Lithuania +	0.4%	1.7%
Luxembourg	0.3%**	0.7%**
Netherlands	4.5%	-0.6%
Portugal +	3.1%	2.5%
Spain +	0.4%	2.3%

+ represents a country where Kontaktmission is currently working

\* approximately half of these people are ethnically Russian. In fact, 19 of the 20 largest evangelical churches in Germany are from these Russian-German groups, and a majority of the growth is among these groups as well.

\*\*These figures represent about 1000 evangelicals with an annual growth of 7 individuals.

Just  
**\$30**  
 per month  
 totally supports a  
 future Russian-speaking  
 missionary!

Please let us know if you would consider personally supporting a future Russian-speaking Kontaktmission missionary for only *\$30 per month*. This amount – amazingly – takes care of nearly all of the student's needs. You will receive information about the student you sponsor as well as communication from them.

*Contact us if  
 you can help!*

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*The Harris Family  
Rob & Carla with Alissa & Ryan*

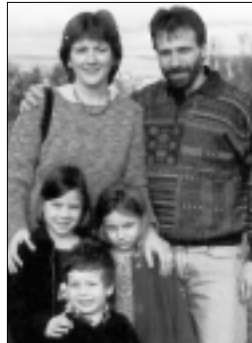
## American Summer Interns in Spain and Germany

One of the primary goals of Kontaktmission USA is the recruitment of new American church-planting missionaries for western Europe. The entire Kontaktmission leadership believes strongly that American missionaries, while not as necessary in eastern Europe where indigenous missionaries are easier to find, represent one of the brightest hopes for new growth among the – evangelistically speaking – relatively stagnant peoples of western Europe.

So we are pleased that two summer interns, Adam Barras and Tim Harrison, both Christian college students who are strongly considering missionary service in the future, are safely into their first month in western



**Tim Harrison**



**Matthias and Marion Kepler and family**

Europe. Tim is working and living with our Spanish team leader, Matthias Kepler, in and around Burriana, on the Spanish Mediterranean coast (rough summer missionary assignment, we know). Meanwhile, Adam is dividing his summer between new church works in Zeitz, in former east Germany, and Prüm, in the west near Belgium, with missionaries Friedhelm Appel and Dirk Staudinger, respectively. He will also visit various other church planting works in Germany.

Both of these young men already had schooling and experience in their internship languages when they left, but they could be nearly fluent when they return home in August. Please pray for Adam and Tim and for the church works they will come to know and love this summer. None of these churches is large, and church work is not easy in either of these countries. And please continue to pray for their continued commitment to missions, and for more missionaries to be raised up for western Europe.



**Adam Barras enjoys the real national beverage of Germany – coffee!**