



Keeping In Contact

News from Kontaktmission USA

July 2006

Re-Evangelizing

Thessalonica

(Thessaloniki, Greece)

Every time you hear a message taken from the books of 1st or 2nd Thessalonians, when the preacher tells you something about “the Thessalonian Christians”, remind yourself there is a group of modern-day Thessalonian Christians there today. Kontaktmission missionary Timotheos Antoniadis, himself a Greek, has been working as a church planter in Thessaloniki for some 13 years. He and his wife Dorothea, along with other members of the KM-Greece team, are now involved in a new church plant, and it is going well.

With its 1 million inhabitants, Thessaloniki is the second largest city in Greece. Its population and culture is not just Greek, but is comprised of a mix of several different nationalities and cultures, including Russian and Albanian. (In fact, the Kontaktmission team also has a Russian-speaking Greek worker, Georgios Papadopoulos.)

Although Thessaloniki was the recipient of some of the first evangelistic efforts of no less a missionary than the Apostle Paul himself and also received his epistles, which many scholars believe to be the very earliest pieces of Christian literature, it is now a city in tremendous need of brand new evangelistic efforts. Centuries of domination by the icon-worshipping and clergy-centered Orthodox Church have resulted in a

population which is superstitious rather than faithful, and unfamiliar with the powerful truth of Scripture. But there are signs of real life among Bible-teaching churches, and Timotheos' church plant is a very encouraging sign indeed. He writes the following about this new work:

“Since the end of September (‘05) there's a new church in Thessaloniki! In the last few months we've clearly seen God's work among us. For example, three



Thessaloniki

women have just been baptized, a Greek, a Russian-Greek, and an Albanian who was a former Muslim. Another Russian-speaking woman has recently chosen a life for Christ as well, and a new house group has been started in Perea, a neighboring town. About 40 adults and 25 children now attend our worship services, which were meeting in a private home until recently. There are new visitors almost every Sunday.

“One of the greatest challenges we have faced has been locating appropriate meeting facilities that are also affordable for us. In a meeting with our leading men (we do not yet have official elders) we determined which criteria we would use for selecting a facility: it had to be centrally located and have good connections to



The church stuffed in a house



A New Believer

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public transportation - near the train station - in order to be easily accessible to the target population we wish to reach. It had to have enough parking spaces and at least 250-300 square meters of floor space for up to 150 attenders, including office space and rooms for children and youth work. It also needed to be in good shape, not needing too much renovation. Finally, it needed to cost no more than 1000 Euros per month."



Jennifer Mahoney is interning with KM in Thessaloniki

It certainly sounds like God still has great intentions for this ancient city with the rich Christian history. Please pray for Timotheos and Dorothea and the KM team in Thessaloniki. And this summer, you can also pray for Jennifer Mahoney, an American intern we have sent to experience church work in Greece and consider if her long-term place may also be with the Thessaloniki team.

KM Internships for Potential Missionaries

Kontaktmission is always interested in sending interns to European fields where they may eventually choose to serve as full-time missionaries. We see an internship as the first step in the sending process, a non-threatening (yet still plenty adventurous) way to make a serious first step toward missionary service.

In addition to Jennifer Mahoney (mentioned above, interning in Greece), other interns serving with Kontaktmission missionaries this summer include Jacob Starkey in Steinheim, Germany; Kristal Schalau (2nd internship) in Germany; and Kristy Lindeman in Kamnik, Slovenia.

KMUSA Board of Directors Visits E. European Works

by Rob Harris,
US Director

Kontaktmission USA exists as a separate US non-profit organization, which requires that we have a board of directors stateside in addition to the various leadership teams on the European side. Two wonderful brothers serve with me on this team, providing great assistance and insight from their backgrounds. Paul Covert has served as a church planter and as missions pastor at two very large churches; he is now prayer pastor at Central Christian Church of the East Valley in Mesa, Arizona. Dr. David Flint teaches business strategy at Utah Valley State College, and has studied abroad. Both have traveled extensively (each has visited more than 30 countries). I am honored and very blessed to have these men's advice and expertise behind me in this work.



Russian-language team leader Willi Loewen (left) translates for Rob Harris at a regional pastors' meeting for Poltava region, Ukraine

But neither of them had yet to visit our E. European works, so a trip was scheduled for this May to visit KM teams in Romania, Ukraine and Russia. The travel schedule was very tight and constant events and activities were planned in each of the countries, including project evaluations, team training meetings, reports from teams on location, and multiple speaking engagements for missionaries, pastors, churches and even 3 separate youth events. Since David is a tremendous singer, he and I also provided some American-style worship music in all three countries.



Paul Covert (standing) and David Flint listen to translation of a report on regional church planting efforts

In addition to four separate 40+ hour travel "days", we faced several other difficulties. In fact, just days before the trip I had sent Paul and David an e-mail saying something like, "Gentlemen, we're going to Eastern Europe, so remember to stay loose. One of us will probably be arrested for a passport glitch, we'll spend an unexpected night in an airport, someone will need emergency surgery, etc. But it will all work out just fine, you'll see." My companions had a good time reminding me of this e-mail as *each of these things happened*. Although to be fair, I have to admit that the person who was arrested was not one of the three of us, but rather one of the young people who translated for us and guided us through Moscow. He was later released.

But as I had also promised them, everything did all work out just fine. And, most importantly, we came away with a much better understanding of the different teams and their projects, as well as of the challenges facing them, which far outweigh those we faced. Severe poverty continues to be a concern for many church members; and this means there is little to be given to the churches for their work as well. The need for well-educated new church workers continues to occupy leadership's efforts. And of course the need of each of these countries for more churches is still overwhelming.

Why Kontaktmission?

“There are so many mission organizations...

What's so special about you guys?”

If you take the time to research and scout out mission organizations on the internet, you'll probably be surprised how many you'll find. Some are probably not organizations you would feel comfortable supporting or applauding, but very many of them would be; there are many excellent teams of very dedicated people doing wonderful work.

And this begs the question above: “Why Kontaktmission?” What is it about Kontaktmission that makes it an important (we would say “vital”) part of the mission landscape? What



KM Romania Team - All but 2 are Romanians

differentiates KM from all these other agencies? The answer is important to us in the US home office as well as to our missionaries, our supporters, and our supporting churches.

The shortest and perhaps best answer is that Kontaktmission is *European and works in Europe*. We are not an American agency working in a foreign environment, but a multinational team with primarily European members and leadership, all very familiar with the cultural, societal and bureaucratic issues facing mission efforts in our target countries. In Russia, for example, we have a strong Russian feel and Russian team members; in Romania, the KM team is mostly Romanian. Our German office is well connected with the various local church groups in the Western European countries where we work.

Americans in the mix. And we are placing our American missionaries right into this multinational, mostly European team. This is important... No one at KM accuses our American missionaries of “cultural imperialism” or of being arrogant or of trying to run everything. (These are accusations often correctly leveled against American missionaries by their national hosts.) Instead, our American team members work as just that: team members. It is their role to add their energies, gifts and abilities to the mission efforts of the various country teams where they find themselves working, and to fulfill roles just like their European colleagues.

Furthermore, Europe continues to be the continent with the smallest percentage of Bible-believing Christians, far below Asia, Africa and South America. So Europe is the continent in greatest need of evangelism, and Kontaktmission is a European mission with creative, culturally-appropriate answers to that need.

Launching into Service

We have several missionary couples and families preparing for service in various European countries. They recently met in Kenosha, Wisconsin for some very important encouragement and training in support-raising. Each of these couples is in the process of raising support; *please contact our office if you would like to be a part of supporting any of them or if you would like additional information or a visit*. We can set it up.

From left to right in the photo:

Steve and Joan Tinsley, going to Orenburg, Russia. Steve will teach in a pedagogical university and they will both help with the newly planted Orenburg church and with evangelism. Departure is set for next spring.



Gene and Amy Corrigan with their three children are going to Austria. After language study and cultural adaptation, probably in or around Vienna, they will work in a church plant as team members in evangelism. Departure as soon as possible.

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Zach and Alyssa Murphy, going to Germany. They have already spent 6 months in Herford, Germany on an initial internship. After a year of working in local church ministry here in the US, they will return for a full term of service with language study next year.

Scott and Leona Way are beginning to prepare for departure to Germany next summer. Leona is German, and Scott will be teaching at a Bible college not far from her home, helping with local church work, and teaching for Bible colleges operated by KM in E. Europe. Leona will serve on staff at the Bible college in a support role. They have three children.

Brian and Amy Rosenberg and their four children are going to Belgium. They will move to Leuven, Belgium for a period of cultural adaptation and language study. Later they will work in a church planting team. They intend to depart as soon as support is raised.

Rob and Carla Harris. Rob serves as US Director of KM. Carla handles the accounting for these recruits, other US missionaries already serving, and more than 20 other projects and interns.

Paul and Dee Border with their children are going to North Italy (German-speaking South Tirol). The Borders will work in conjunction with two existing congregations in the region during their cultural integration and language study. Long-term goals are evangelism and church planting. Intended departure is this fall.

Electronic Funds Transfers to KMUSA are now possible. Please contact the US office either by e-mail at MissionKM@aol.com or by telephone at (731) 824-0182 to request a form for this service, which can be mailed or e-mailed to you. A signature and written verification (both on the form) are required. This form of giving is especially useful for regular monthly givers, but it can be used for any gift, large or small.

Please check out our website at www.kontaktmissionusa.org. If you haven't checked in a while, there are several new items and pages, including information on contacting our missionaries and a "wish list" of needs for various ministries. Thanks for visiting us on the web!