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worldview

MON
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Take Heart for Those on the Fringes

- Kids Page
- Estonia Church Plant
- Kosovo Journal



Gaylon Wampler

Idyllic beauty characterizes much of Montenegro's landscape.

4 MONTENEGRO: TAKE HEART FOR THOSE ON THE FRINGES

Ben and Jessi Bock, AGWM's first missionaries to Montenegro, are discovering a providential plan long in the making.

by Kristel Ringer Ortiz

22 AN UNQUIET HEART

An AGWM church plant in Estonia's capital passes the baton of leadership.

by Kristel Ringer Ortiz

28 KOSOVO JOURNAL

Years of ministry have led to the launch of groundbreaking conferences for the Balkan countries.

by Lisa Frey

30 UNSUNG HEROES: STEVE AND ASTRID DUNN

What started as a bicycle trip through Europe turned into three decades of church planting in Germany.

by Renée Griffith

31 WHEN KANSAS TOUCHES MALAWI

A rural Kansas church brings water and Living Water to Malawi.

by Renée Griffith

Each Issue

20 FIELD NOTES — Regional updates

21 KIDS PAGE



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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Our stories this month run the gamut of missions endeavors – beginnings and endings, pioneering and transitioning. Each article illustrates the vision missionaries strive to realize: lives transformed and churches planted.

Jesus often used illustrations to describe the work of God and His plan of salvation. As He spoke, Jesus painted word-pictures with pearls, coins, and lost sheep, but His most-used word picture was that of the harvest.

Agricultural societies revolve around the seasons – sowing, cultivating and harvesting. That kind of work never ends, for as you end one season, you start preparing for the next stage, only to have it all replicate the next year.

Our report on Montenegro is about sowing. Missionaries are building relationships, sharing about Christ, and laboring to build a community of faith.

Estonia reveals both a sowing and a harvesting story. A church has been established, and in an act of harvest, the baton is being passed to Estonians. Now the missionaries focus on sowing in other communities.

We must always rejoice with the harvest, but not to the neglect of the task ahead. When there is a window of harvest, we must take advantage and work diligently. But we are also called to keep moving forward, toward the next field, the next city, the next country.

Thank you for being a part of this great cycle of spiritual harvest! How is the Lord speaking to you about your part in this global task? We'd love to hear from you at worldview@agwm.org.

ANDY RAATZ
AGWM Communications director



Next Issue

- **Lithuania:** Pointing a proud and ancient culture toward God
- **Brazil:** Reaching indigenous tribes on the move to Brazil's cities

MOUNTAIN PEOPLE NEAR GRO

*by Kristel Ringer Ortiz
Photographs by Gaylon Wampler*

**TAKE HEART FOR THOSE
ON THE FRINGES**



Oliver Bock is 3 years old, but his dignified manner often belies his age.

With a spoonful of his mother's chili poised to his lips, he declares calmly, "My best friend at school is named Abdul. But sometimes I don't know what he is talking about. So, I just sit in my chair and hang out."

Oliver is the only American child in his day care in Podgorica, Montenegro. Ben and Jessi Bock, parents of Oliver and baby Nora, are the first AGWM missionaries serving in Montenegro. They understand their son's sense of displacement in a faraway land.

Located in Europe's Balkan region, small, history-rich Montenegro shares borders with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania and Serbia. Its beautiful coastal region along the Adriatic Sea is frequented by many of Europe's wealthy class.

Considered part of Serbia until just 10 years ago, Montenegro bears the scars of the 1990s' Bosnian/Serbian wars. Largely made up of Eastern Orthodox adherents or cultural Muslims, the nation is

hard soil for the message of Jesus.

"Spiritual darkness has reigned here for thousands of years," Ben states. "It is said that the Reformation did not begin in Montenegro until the 1990s. For a few decades the light has been breaking through, but overcoming the darkness is difficult."

Jessi agrees. "It is time to grab hold and understand the need for Jesus in Montenegro. It is time to take heart for those who live on the fringes." →



MONTE
NEGRO



“Sometimes When We Drink Enough”

Pavle has lived many years on the fringes, and his soul is weary. “Sometimes after my friends and I drink enough, we work up confidence to talk about God and what might happen to us after we die,” he says. “But we have no answers, so we just keep drinking.”

Pavle’s wrenching statement summarizes what the Bocks believe to be Montenegro’s overall spiritual condition.

“Orthodoxy is huge, as is Islam,” Ben explains. “We know of less than 100 followers of Jesus who are actually Montenegrin. Most others are Serbian or Bosnian, many of whom are redeemed drug addicts.”

Though still overcoming the language barrier, the Bocks look for opportunities to strike up conversations about spiritual things. At virtually every encounter they have had so far, they have discovered Montenegrins to be deeply hungry for truth. No one has shut the conversation down.

“People have looked on the surface and assumed Montenegro is not ready to hear about God,” Ben says. “But Jesus is saying that it is ready. It’s time to get past our fears. Not that it won’t be hard, but the field is ripe.” →

“PEOPLE HAVE LOOKED ON THE SURFACE AND ASSUMED MONTENEGRO IS NOT READY TO HEAR ABOUT GOD,” BEN SAYS. “BUT JESUS IS SAYING THAT IT IS READY. IT’S TIME TO GET PAST OUR FEARS.”

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GRO

Below Ruins of the Roman city of Doclea lie just outside Podgorica.



Emboldened Explorers

At least once a week, Ben and Jessi pack their family into their van and strike out across Montenegro. The skies are wide and banded with ethereal colors. Craggy mountains call to mind fantasy worlds. In the famed Kotor Bay area, the ancient walled city of Kotor stares across waters where pirates once battled and ships sank among the fjords. Just outside Podgorica lie ruins of the first-century Roman city of Doclea, while grey remnants of the Soviet Union still haunt some towns.

There are many things to see in Montenegro, and many people to meet. The Bocks travel to all corners of the country, meeting and cultivating relationships with as many people as they can.

Like residents of most war-torn nations, Montenegrins can have a very hard exterior, Ben and Jessi explain. But people across the nation are remarkably hospitable and kind, particularly when it comes to children. Indeed, Oliver and Nora — with her enormous blue eyes — melt hearts wherever they go, opening doors to conversation

with people of all ages.

“Children are very loved in Montenegro,” Jessi says. “People go out of their way to greet the kids.”

Fledgling conversations lead to the beginnings of friendship, which eventually leads to open hearts, Ben and Jessi say. “Though we cannot speak the language very well yet, our neighbors always invite us over. We sit and eat and enjoy time together. In Montenegro, you will never see people playing on their phones while they are together. Relationships are too important. They sit face to face.”

On one such visit in the Islamic neighborhood of Stari Varos, the Bocks were welcomed into a house that has been home to generations of the same family for over 400 years. Yet another visit earned them welcome at a multigenerational farm high in the mountains. Old men visited on the porch, young men watched curiously, and a woman bustled around, clucking her tongue at Nora, providing treats for Oliver, and loading Jessi down with gifts of berries and homemade juice.

“It is important for us to keep exploring,” Ben says, “but it is also vital to be continually going back to the same areas to speak and develop further openings for witness and relationship. We must allow the Holy Spirit to lead us and make us bold.” →

“WE MUST ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT TO LEAD US AND MAKE US BOLD.”



Jessi Heugel



Above The Islamic neighborhood of Stari Varos is hundreds of years old.

MONTE NEGRO



Jovica

Indeed, the Holy Spirit has been orchestrating Ben and Jessi's journey to Montenegro since long before they or anyone else were aware of it.

At age 19, Ben, who grew up in Madrid with veteran missionary parents Jacob and Julie Bock, moved to the United States to pursue education at Central Bible College (now Evangel University) in Springfield, Missouri. The May 2009 *Pentecostal Evangel World Missions Edition* (*WorldView's* predecessor), featured a Serbian man named Jovica. After radically encountering Jesus, Jovica left his home to become a missionary pastor in Montenegro. Ben was 20 when he read Jovica's story. His heart was gripped, but he could not have imagined that his destiny and Jovica's were intertwined.

Jessi had grown up in Alabama and was also preparing for vocational ministry at CBC.

"We were friends for about three years before Ben asked me out on our first date," Jessi laughs. "I told my brother Josh, who also went to school with us and is a close friend to Ben. He told me, 'I don't know why Ben asked you out, but trust me, he doesn't like you. He would have told me!'"

Ben may not have discussed his intentions with his friend, but he made them clear to Jessi. The

pair married shortly after their graduation and became youth pastors in Delaware, where Oliver was born.

The Bocks began transitioning from stateside ministry to global missions. As they asked the Lord where to go, they began interacting with AGWM leadership. The Balkan region surfaced in discussions.

"As a teenager I had helped with some work in Croatia, and right before we started dating, Jessi and I both served on a short-term missions trip there," Ben says. "As we began talking with AGWM, I remembered Jovica's story in the old *Evangel*."

He found the article and showed it to Jessi; the decision was made. They would serve in Montenegro. Preparations included a year of language school and training in Grenoble, France. The months ahead brought joy as well as deep sorrow. Beautiful baby Nora was born in 2017; Ben's mother, Julie Bock, died in April 2018 following a battle with cancer (see "The Best Is Yet to Come," *WorldView*, September 2018).

With training at last complete, the Bocks arrived in Montenegro in June 2018.

Pastor Jovica, who by then had been working in Montenegro for 25 years, was amazed when he met Ben and Jessi and learned the history of God's calling on their lives. Because of his story, here was a young family ready to put their shoulders to the plow alongside him. →



AS THEY ASKED THE LORD WHERE TO GO, THEY BEGAN INTERACTING WITH AGWM LEADERSHIP. THE BALKAN REGION SURFACED IN DISCUSSIONS.

Top Ben visits with residents of a remote mountain farm. **Above** Ben and Jessi spend many hours in language study with Masha, a strong Montenegrin believer.



Left Pastor Jovica

Jess Heugel



“BEFORE WE CAME TO MONTENEGRO, WE FELT GOD’S WARNING THAT A WARRING SPIRIT HAS GRIPPED THIS AREA FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS.”

MONTENEGRO

Warring Brothers

The Bocks’ presence and partnership have been a boost to Jovica and four other pastors (a Bosnian, Italian, American, and Serbian) who serve in Montenegro. Thus far, no Montenegrins have stepped into roles of spiritual leadership, though the pastors are working hard toward that end.

Jovica describes his role in Montenegro as that of a farmer, one who must keep pulling rocks out of the earth before even being able to plant the seeds of the gospel. For 25 years, he has been pulling spiritual rocks from the Montenegrin harvest field.

Younger Montenegrins are especially open spiritually but are slow to commit to church — the majority of churchgoers are older.

“Before we came to Montenegro,” Jessi says, “we felt God’s warning that a warring spirit has gripped this area for thousands of years. In the Balkans, brothers have warred against brothers. Though in this culture family means everything, there is often distrust even within households.”

Indeed, since moving to Monte-

negro, the Bocks have felt confusion and tension on the rise even in their own home. They have also experienced an abnormal amount of sickness.

“As a child, and even into my college years, I dealt with fear a lot,” Jessi adds. “Since I married Ben in 2013, the Lord has brought healing to me — fear became an afterthought. But when we began our lives in Montenegro, the fear came back. I always want lights on in the house. Nightmares began to return, darkness at times feels crushing, and that is how I am sensing the spiritual environment here.”

In response to this darkness, Ben and Jessi constantly pray over their home and over Podgorica. They recognize that their dependence on the Holy Spirit is absolutely vital. “We just depend on the Spirit inside to pray,” they share. →



“He Does Not Wish You to Die Until You Are Safe”

Across Montenegro and the entire Balkan region, mental and emotional war wounds remain. Everyone has a story, even the pastors among whom the Bocks serve. But they believe their wounds enable them to understand and help bear the hurt of Montenegrins who need to encounter Jesus.

Sinisa, who pastors a congregation of Roma (Gypsy) and Egyptian refugees, fled to Montenegro from Bosnia during the war. His wife came as a refugee from Kosovo. Vladimir, who pastors the Podgorica congregation the Bocks currently attend, came from Serbia. In the beautiful coastal town of Kaminari, Americans Joel and Nikola Baker pastor a house church. The Bakers rely heavily on ministry partnership with a remarkable Bosnian couple, Uso and Devla, who lived in Sarajevo, Bosnia, during the worst conflicts of the 1990s.

“It was a terrible war,” Devla says. “I could write books about what I saw.”

For four years, Sarajevo was closed to the outside world. No goods came in or out, and there was no electricity. After a particular day when 1,000 people were slaughtered, Devla began working with children victimized by the war.

In her 40s, while working as a midwife in a hospital, Devla became violently ill. Doctors predicted she would not survive. As Devla lay dying, a Swiss co-worker visited her. “There is only one Lord,” the woman said, “and He does not wish you to die until you are safe.”

The woman’s words struck Devla’s heart, confirming her

deepest, most secret hope.

“In name, my family had been Muslim,” she says. “But we were not practicing. My father was a communist. I always desired something stronger. During the war on earth, where there are many lords, I looked at the sky. Day came and night came — there was order. If there had been many lords in the sky, there would have been war there too. So because the sky had order, I knew there must only be one Lord in it.”

Devla began to recover from her illness. Three months later, she heard a Voice speak to her. “Today you do not know Me. Go to My house of prayer.” Devla got Uso,

“DOCTORS SAID I WAS TO DIE, AND THAT DAY, I DID. I DIED TO MY OLD LIFE, AND NOW JESUS LIVES IN ME.”

Devla and Uso



Left At the Kaminari house church, believers from several nations pray and work toward Montenegro's redemption.

and they went to a church. “I felt the Holy Spirit, and my life forever changed. A balm came and healed me. Doctors said I was to die, and that day, I did. I died to my old life, and now Jesus lives in me.”

Uso joined her in accepting Christ. “I am not strong alone,” Devla says, “But I am strong when I am with my husband. He gave me courage when the devil tried to kill me, because he understood what God was preparing us for.”

Immediately after her healing and their salvation commitment, Devla and Uso closed the restaurant they owned and opened a home for children in need. Today as they help Joel and Nikola lead the small Kaminari congregation, Uso and Devla are helping bring that healing and forgiveness to a varied group of Turks, Bosnians, Serbians and more.

“Montenegro is harder than it used to be,” they confess. “Before, there was fear and more of a sense of need. But our job is just to be obedient. Obedience is very important. Through it we have received so much joy. Ours is a testimony of forgiveness even in war — even those who murdered Devla’s brother and sister.”

One man in their church, a fellow Bosnian who was miraculously delivered from violence and alcoholism, agrees. “When the Lord’s people are obedient and begin to pray, Jesus will heal our Balkans.” →

MONTE
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Blazing Trails and Building Teams

“The spiritual death separating Montenegrins and others in the Balkans from God is the same spiritual death rampant in the United States,” Ben says.

Many Montenegrins, Ben and Jessi are discovering, have no concept of reaching out to God personally. The Bocks dream of establishing a team and a ministry center in the northern part of the country for prayer, training and outreach. Jessi hopes that one day they will be so known for carrying the message of Jesus that when they drive into a new area, residents will come running, eager to have more of the gospel explained to them.

“We would love to send out teams to foster and develop new fellowships as they spring up in towns and cities across Montenegro,” Ben says. “We are considering partnership with seminary students

from other Balkan countries, who would have cultural similarities with Montenegrins and the training to help serve them.

“We are looking for team members willing to push through and say yes to Christ repeatedly, even when things are difficult. We are looking for people willing to work hard to learn a difficult language — not just adventure seekers. We are looking for people desperate for more.”

“Montenegro is a pioneer mission field; the ‘wins’ we have are often very small,” Jessi says. “The kind of people we are praying to join us need to be OK with small wins.”

KRISTEL RINGER ORTIZ
AGWM Communications



JESSI HOPES THAT ONE DAY THEY WILL BE SO KNOWN FOR CARRYING THE MESSAGE OF JESUS THAT WHEN THEY DRIVE INTO A NEW AREA, RESIDENTS WILL COME RUNNING, EAGER TO HAVE MORE OF THE GOSPEL EXPLAINED TO THEM.

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Your Move

In contrast to nations where AGWM has maintained a presence for decades, Montenegro is a land of pioneer missions opportunities. Stand with us in prayer for AGWM personnel on the ground there, as well as for their partners from other nations. Consider whether the Lord is speaking to you about becoming more involved in reaching Montenegro and other nations in the world, perhaps in one of the following ways:

- Connect with our missionaries serving around the world. Visit agwm.org and enter the last name or country of interest into the search box under “Find A Missionary.” From there, you can sign up to receive newsletters and learn how you can partner with our global team.
- Pray for the unreached. Visit agwm.org/prayer and sign up to receive weekly emails with prayer requests from our global team.
- Go! There are opportunities to get involved, from two weeks to two years. Visit agwm.org/GO for a list of locations and opportunities.

FIELD NOTES FROM THE AGWM REGIONS

Armenia TRANSLATION PROJECT MARKS MILESTONE FOR CHURCH

Seven years in the making, a God-sized vision to equip the Armenian church came to pass at the end of 2018 with the translation into Armenian of Global University's entire undergraduate program in Bible and theology. This project, which included translating 73 textbooks for almost 50 classes, created the first theological library in the history of Armenia's Pentecostal churches. AGWM personnel Shahan and Tyra Teberian, who supervised the project, believe that these books are only the beginning of what will be an expansion of Christian scholarship coming from Armenia as its church leaders answer the call to be a lighthouse for Christ in a sea of Islam. "We wish we could scream from the mountaintops just how important this day is so that you could feel our sense of excitement in the knowledge that we are leaving an enduring legacy for as-yet-unknown generations," the Teberians say. Multiple parties came together in long-term partnership for this massive undertaking, including AGWM, Global University, Armenia's Pentecostal churches, and faithful supporters in the United States. 



Cambodia BAPTISMS AT THE LIFE CENTER



Missionaries Ben and Kami Heilman run The LIFE Center in Kampot, Cambodia, a Christian youth center offering Bible studies, English and Chinese classes, and a positive, safe environment. On the heels of its third anniversary, The LIFE Center has stepped into a season of spiritual harvest. Recently, two Cambodian students who attend LIFE Center decided to surrender

themselves to Christ and publicly declare their faith through water baptism.

Makara, a young man who had been attending Bible story nights, special events, and English classes for about a year, acknowledged what Jesus did for him and decided to follow Jesus for the rest of his life, making public proclamation of his faith. Cresda, another Cambodian youth, was invited to The

LIFE Center by one of his Christian friends and his Chinese language teacher. Through worship nights and Bible studies, Cresda has decided to profess Christ as well.

The Heilmans joyfully concur with the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians that while they and the other Christian workers at The LIFE Center have watered and planted each gospel seed, "God has been making it grow" (3:6, NIV). 

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KIDS PAGE



BGMC Directors David and Mary Boyd minister with their team to kids around the world.

David and Mary Boyd direct Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge, the Assemblies of God missions program for kids that instills a heart of compassion for reaching the lost. Begun in 1949, BGMC is celebrating 70 years of worldwide impact this year. David recently listed for WorldView some "things you might not know about BGMC."

- BGMC was never designed to be a money maker. It was designed to teach kids about missions, encourage them to care about and pray about the world, and be prepared if God calls them to be missionaries someday. When kids pray, they want to do something. And many, many kids are doing chores and making and selling things and then giving the money from those activities to missions.
- An amazing record-setter is one young man who managed to raise more than \$100,000 for missions from the time he was 5 until he was 11. He gave out 50 Buddy Boxes to relatives and friends and others, like the lady who cut his hair. They all put spare change in those boxes.
- Social media is a growing part of how kids are getting involved. One girl posted on Facebook that she would crack an egg on her parents' heads for every \$10 people would give to missions. About 450 people sent in \$10, and 450 eggs were cracked on Mom and Dad.
- These projects can also give kids a chance to tell their friends about Jesus. One girl in Florida sold painted sea shells to raise money. She asked her Muslim friends next door to help her paint Scripture verses on the sea shells!
- Buddy Barrel started off made of wood. Over the years, it's gone through some changes. Now it's translucent yellow and plastic.



Check out bgmc.ag.org to learn more about Boys and Girls Missionary Challenge. Let's make 2019 the best year ever for helping AG missionaries all over the world! 

⋮
HOW ONE WOMAN
FOUND MEANING AND
TRUE FREEDOM

AN UNQUIET HEART

STORY BY
KRISTEL RINGER ORTIZ

⋮

“I was raised like every other average Estonian,” Kristin Külm, 33, says. Her voice is soft, and her English lilts with a Nordic accent. “My family did not have firm beliefs or a set way of doing things. My parents were not for or against religion. I looked at Christianity as a weird story that people somehow managed to convince themselves is true, and I wondered how they could believe such a thing.” →

Kristin's home country of Estonia rests along the Baltic Sea, just west of Russia. The tiny nation is marked by regal forests, bogs, windmills, waterfalls and medieval cities. Estonia's population has survived and preserved its way of life through centuries of conquest and domination by nations who imposed a false form of Christianity. Eventually the Soviet Union crushed all freedom of religion.

As a result, Christianity became viewed merely as a religion imposed by conquering nations, and exquisite Estonia is now ranked as one of the most atheistic nations in the world.

QUESTIONING AND SEARCHING

Kristin speaks with pride of Estonia and its people.

"We are a very simple Nordic country. When I travel, I miss our simplicity the most, and our dark rye bread. No one else makes it as we do here. To me, it is the flavor of home."

Estonians are not necessarily drawn to take the first step towards other people, Kristin explains, but once someone gets to know them, they are warm and caring, able to be lifelong friends.

Estonians are also straightforward.

"Not rude, Kristin insists, "but we won't go out of our way to tell you you're awesome if you are not. I appreciate knowing where I stand!"

In years past, Kristin struggled to find purpose in life. By conservative Nordic standards, she was considered hyper. She loved movement and new ideas and had many questions.

"I had no faith system, only

opinions and a worldview," she says. "But I constantly wondered what was the meaning of life and why no one else seemed to be asking that."

After high school, desperate to see the world, Kristin accepted volunteer opportunities in Africa and left her hometown of Tallinn, Estonia's capital. For nearly 10 years she lived abroad, including years of service in Angola, Mozambique and Malawi. Within the expat community she found some relief, feeling more defined by herself instead of by a nation.

Still, her heart was unquiet.

"I decided there was no point to life," she says. "The lowest point came when I was losing people in my life. Too many were dying too fast. I was just getting by, kind of waiting but not caring at all what would happen next."

"HEY. TRY ME."

Though she did not know it, Kristin was not alone in her darkness.

Back home in Tallinn, she was invited to an Alpha course, an introductory meeting about Christianity and the Bible. Focus Church Tallinn, planted and led by AGWM missionaries Nick and Olivia Puccini, hosted the Alpha group, and Kristin decided to go. But she was wary.

If anyone manages to brainwash me, I will congratulate them, she thought. My mind is so critical that I do not think anyone can.

"But that's just how God works," Kristin remembers with a smile. "He comes in the most unexpected ways. It was not any person who somehow said the right thing. It was the right timing. It was as if God just reached out His hand, pulled me up, and said, 'Hey. Try Me.'"

And so it was that Kristin found her freedom right at home in Tallinn, which in medieval times was a Danish city-state and a refuge for country folk pressed into serfdom by Germanic landholders. Tallinn has long been a place of socio-political freedom and independence. Today, for people like Kristin, is becoming a home of spiritual freedom.

"I can't imagine going back to a life without God. I enjoy life much more," Kristin says. "I always thought of the Christian faith as having tons of rules to follow that make you miserable because you can never enjoy life anymore. But, actually, knowing that God is out there somewhere, and yet also very near, and that I can rely on Him gives me a tremendous sense of freedom. There is joy and freedom from all the nonsense the world says we have to follow." →



Michael Muench, iStockphoto (previous page)

Kristin Kūlm is on the leadership team of Focus Church Tallinn.

A MUSICAL REVOLUTION

From the earliest moments of Kristin's encounter with Jesus, Olivia Puccini and Tanya McKinley, a fellow AGWM missionary and formerly one of Focus Church's staff pastors, committed themselves to walk with her as she grew in her faith. The women became close friends, sharing life, travel and spiritual growth.

Olivia, a classically trained musician, collaborated with Kristin on the music and sound at Focus Church. Music is an integral part of Estonian life, attributed with helping to sustain Estonian language and culture and maintain a sense of unity.

Between 1987 and 1991, during the crushing Soviet rule, even conversations on the streets were being monitored and squelched. Music proved to be uniquely powerful as hundreds of thousands of Estonians gathered to sing "illegal" patriotic songs.

Soviet authorities knew music impassioned the people, and they did their best to crush such gatherings. What became known as the Singing Revolution would not be contained. In groups of as many as 200,000, Estonians bravely and strategically sang their way to freedom, unnerving and shaking their Soviet oppressors to their core. The power of the human voice massed in song could not be ignored. In 1991, the Soviet Union crumbled, and Estonia emerged a free nation.

| 26

LEARNING TO LEAD

As her soul soared out of spiritual oppression, Kristin was excited to learn to run sound at the church, thereby contributing musically. "I was glad they were willing to teach me," she says. But about a year and a half after meeting Christ, she began to feel God was leading her to do more. She struggled to come to terms with what she should do next.

"For most of my life, I had been the example of what a Christian is not," she explains. "How could I get up and start trying to lead?"

After six months of such struggle, Kristin again stepped out in faith and began to study ministry with Nick and Olivia. Today she is training to become one of the pastors at Focus Church. She is an answer to prayer for the Puccinis, who seek to fulfill AGWM's pillar belief that new churches should be led by believers within their home countries as soon as possible.

"God is persistent," Kristin says. She describes her leadership training as a very fast but very exciting roller coaster. She has begun to preach on occasion at Focus Church, and she leads Alpha courses, a ministry that remains especially close to her.

"Alpha is how I got saved," she says. "My heart is in Alpha. It is amazing to witness people's journeys. My own journey is scary sometimes, but most times it is the best thing."

Outside of her ministry at Focus Church, Kristin teaches history and geography at an international school. It's an unexpected vocation for a self-described "headache" for her own teachers growing up. Leadership and lesson planning are familiar parts of her full-time job;



© Michael Muench

Tallinn, Estonia

Bible lesson and sermon preparation have been a greater challenge.

"When I prepare to preach," she says, "I can feel the responsibility. I have to surrender; I have to let God speak into me as I prepare. And when I am preaching, even if I see just one person's face light up, I know I see the Holy Spirit working because I am not intelligent enough to wow anyone."

DREAMING

The Baltic AGWM team is partnering with Pastor Ago Lilleorg, bishop of the Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church, with the dream of planting 30 churches in the next 10 years. They are also developing a church planting school they hope will serve not only Estonia, but also Scandinavia, Russia, Latvia and Lithuania. Church planting endeavors in Lithuania are already well underway. Plans are for 30 to 40 church planting trainees to come to Estonia in the next couple of years to work specifically in the Baltic context.

"The U.S. AG does a good job of assessing and training church planters," says Nick, who serves as AGWM's area director of the Baltic countries. "We want to adapt and implement a similar process around the Baltics. We have to live missional lives and raise up new ministry leaders so this work will continue. It's tempting to just send someone out to plant a church, but I believe it serves us well to wait patiently until someone rises up with a calling to a specific place."

Kristin is one such person. In the midst of her despair and hurt, God reached out His hand and raised her up to lead other Estonians to freedom and refuge in Jesus.

Her blue eyes are clear and unwavering. "I had no dreams until I was called to ministry," she says. "Now, my calling is to follow God and see where He leads me, and I am committed to go where He wants me to go, pastoring and teaching and sharing the Message. It is pretty cool to have a dream." 🙏

| KRISTEL RINGER ORTIZ
| AGWM Communications

| 27

We first arrived in Kosovo with three small children and the typical enthusiasm of new missionaries ready to take on an entire nation for Jesus. We soon found ourselves confronting a reality check with the lack of electricity and running water and our inability to learn the language fluently in 12 months.

We finished our three-year term, returned to the States to raise needed funds, and began our second term in Kosovo with renewed vision for our small village church plant. Although we had no team members, we were more determined than ever to reach more people for the gospel. Faced with difficult circumstances, we prayerfully processed our disappointment and feelings of failure while strengthening the foundation of our personal, married, and family life. Another stateside itineration schedule behind us, we again returned to the nation God has called us to reach.

The Assemblies of God built the Hope Center here as an aid distribution center after the war in

1999. This 9,000-square-foot, three-floor complex has made us humbly aware of our own limitations, but we have been discovering ways to facilitate the Hope Center to its fullest potential.

We have hosted many teams in our new guest center, each team helping to create momentum for the work of God in our city. Team members spend time in prayer and worship, greet our neighbors, and host special events like a kids' carnival, Easter service, street evangelism, handing out free Bibles and literature, and door-to-door ministry offering prayer to anyone in need. This past summer, we participated in a large outreach in our city and were pleasantly surprised at the openness among this 95-percent-Muslim population. Kosovo's next generation is searching for truth, and we are at the peak of this spiritual formation.

Shifting the spiritual climate here means keeping the laborers encouraged and ready for harvest. Last October, I helped launch the first Christian women's conference in Kosovo. Forty women from

around Albania and Kosovo gathered for a time of worship, fellowship, connection, and strengthening in God's Word. "Unite," this four-day conference, offered women a safe place to share their struggles of living cross-culturally and find encouragement to continue on in Christ's strength. Knowing how hard these ladies keep pushing forward on a daily basis, we created an atmosphere where they could laugh, rest, get a pedicure or haircut, participate in an art project, process life with a counselor, and enjoy catered meals. Growing in relationship with one another brings healing to this broken land.

Repairing brokenness is no small task in these divided Balkan countries. Tensions are still high between nations and people groups. As we listen to the rhythms of God's heart for this land, we know the only way forward is through prayers of repentance and the forgiveness that Jesus offered all of us on the cross.

The Balkan Call is a conference designed to bring healing and reconciliation among Christian believers across southeast Europe. My husband, Steve, worked on staff with missionaries from neighboring countries to invite as many churches as possible to attend. Some of the countries

represented were Bulgaria, Montenegro, Macedonia, Greece, Albania, and Kosovo. We witnessed brothers and sisters from politically divided regions praying blessing over one another. It was powerful, healing, and it was strategic to bring down demonic entities at work between their nations. Mind-blowing worship, corporate prayer, and unity surrounded us for three days. Special speakers poured over us their wisdom and challenged us to move forward in embracing our neighbor.

On the last day of the event, all 150 participants were encouraged to take Communion with someone of another



Steve and Lisa Frey with their children David, Raema, Jonathan, Naomi and Selah

nationality. Two by two, many with arms linked, they filed down the aisle towards the Lord's Supper. Grace and humility permeated the atmosphere that morning. I believe God's will was being done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day, O Lord, and many more to come until we see Your Kingdom reign in Kosovo. 

STEVE AND LISA FREY
AGWM missionaries to Kosovo

KOSOVO JOURNAL

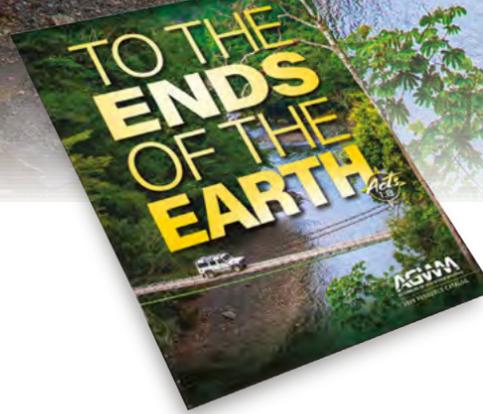
BY LISA FREY

A friend of the Freys looks out on the Kosovo countryside.

Grace and humility permeated the atmosphere that morning. I believe God's will was being done on earth as it is in heaven.

— INTRODUCING —
2019 MISSIONS THEME

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH



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UNSUNG HEROES

DIVINE APPOINTMENTS IN GERMANY



Astrid and Steve Dunn

In 1977 Steve Dunn was part of a 10-week bicycle outreach in Europe. His heart was challenged by the spiritual darkness he sensed. After Bible college, he moved to Munich to learn German and work with AGWM missionaries. Two years later he served with a German mission taking Christian literature behind the Iron Curtain — an assignment involving

much travel through West Germany. Steve noticed the lack of Pentecostal churches from city to city, and his desire grew for church planting in Germany.

Steve came back to Munich in 1986 as a missionary in training. At a prayer service he met Astrid, a German citizen and registered nurse. The two soon married and later adopted their two children through the Munich youth department. From the Munich church base, the Duns helped start two new churches in the cities of Rosenheim and Bad Tölz. They moved to Moosburg to start another church, which Steve currently pastors. An additional

church plant in Erding came out of the Moosburg church.

Recently, the Duns have helped serve immigrants seeking asylum in Germany. Steve offered German language training to new arrivals as a point of contact to share the gospel. "I had encounters with people from so many unreached people groups to whom I could never go as a missionary in their countries," Steve says. "I was

the first Christian many of them had ever met, and when I gave them a New Testament, it was the first time for many of them to read the words of Jesus."

Through various outreaches, Steve seeks to minister to the heart of each individual. Almost every day he walks an hour "with God in His garden" to hear from Him and be open to divine appointments. "I started meeting people who would otherwise never come to our church," Steve explains, and he has had opportunities to pray with and witness to people from all walks of life. "My passion is trying to understand where Jesus is leading me day to day." 

RENÉE GRIFFITH
AGWM Communications

2019 AG World Missions Theme

TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

When "W Kansas Touches Malawi

hat if we raised enough money to drill a well in Africa?" someone asked at the end of the 2017 annual church business meeting.

The 29-member Faith Assembly of God in Humboldt, Kansas, had never sponsored a missions project before. Earlier that year, new pastor Lew Griffith brought in AGWM missionaries Mark and Vickie Alexander to share about Africa Oasis Project, a ministry that drills wells through partnerships with African churches.

A well typically cost \$7,000. Members pulled together, using what they had — a popcorn machine, a snow-cone machine, a cotton-candy machine — at local events. They sold meat sticks and hundreds of Christian t-shirts, bringing sale items into their workplaces and setting up a table at the local farmer's market, explaining that all proceeds went to a well in Africa.

Faith Assembly designated a monthly "Well Sunday," in which a portion of the service was devoted to praying for clean water and the Living Water to reach more of Africa. Pastor Lew constructed a wooden replica of the well, and congregants gave to the project by pouring money into its central chamber.

Fundraising began in April 2017. In three months, the church raised \$7,000. Amidst celebration, congregants asked, "Why can't we raise money for another well?" By October, they had raised another \$7,000. When Mark Alexander returned to receive what he thought was a check to fund one well, he was shocked to find a check for \$14,000.

The first \$7,000 has provided a well for Mhuju village, northern Malawi, and gives water to 2,000 people. Mhuju Assembly of God maintains the well; in response, the village headman has given more land to the church. The remaining \$7,000 is desig-



nated for a well in Chimbiya village that will serve around 3,500 people.

"The people of Faith Assembly really gave themselves to this project," says Pastor Lew. "They took complete ownership."

No one from Faith Assembly has been to Africa, but through their sacrificial giving, the gospel is getting to the ends of the earth. 

RENÉE GRIFFITH
AGWM Communications

"The people of Faith Assembly really gave themselves to this project."

Left Faith Assembly congregants hung banners to publicize their fundraising.

Right Villagers in Mhuju celebrate the new well and collect water in buckets provided by BGMC.



Your Move

In contrast to nations where AGWM has maintained a presence for decades, Montenegro is a land of pioneer missions opportunities. Stand with us in prayer for AGWM personnel on the ground there, as well as for their partners from other nations. Consider whether the Lord is speaking to you about becoming more involved in reaching Montenegro and other nations in the world, perhaps in one of the following ways:

Montenegro

- Connect with our missionaries serving around the world. Visit agwm.org and enter the last name or country of interest into the search box under "Find A Missionary." From there, you can sign up to receive newsletters and learn how you can partner with our global team.
- Pray for the unreached. Visit agwm.org/prayer and sign up to receive weekly emails with prayer requests from our global team.
- Go! There are opportunities to get involved, from two weeks to two years. Visit agwm.org/GO for a list of locations and opportunities.

CONNECT WITH US:

