

Real Culture

An invitation to a Catholic church opened doors in Austria. *By Lisa Meyers*

It was the first invitation I've received from a Catholic in Austria. Usually I'm asked to sing for Christian Women's Club meetings. But this request came from a woman who had "somehow" gotten hold of one of my CDs. She wanted me to come to a breakfast at the Catholic parish she attends.

"Only about 32 women—and the priest—will come," she said. "But they'll really appreciate hearing what you have to say."

I felt a bit nervous. The 4,000-member church is located in the "real" Austrian culture. It's real because "free church culture" makes up less than one percent of the Austrian population.

The woman who invited me knows the Lord. She's been praying that her fellow churchgoers will come to know Jesus personally.

More women came to the breakfast than expected. The moderator introduced me and said, "Lisa comes from the free church sector. It's probably her first time among us. I think she's brave."

Standing to speak, I said, "I'm humbled by the invitation. And it's really you who were brave to invite me!"

Thanks to the prayers of my supporters, I felt comfortable from the beginning. We discussed some memorized prayers that many Austrians say with their children. Some of them are good, but some focus on performance. Then I told them my favorite story—the story of a God who loves us!

At the closing blessing, the priest looked at me and said, "Frau Meyers, you have touched my heart in a deep, deep way." He had tears in his eyes.

I began to have an "Eric Liddell moment." In the movie *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell says, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure."

Maybe the quote didn't fit my circumstances exactly. Yet I too believe God made me for a purpose. But He also made me a good communicator. And when I tell His story, I feel His pleasure.

After the concert, the women and I had some deep conversations. I've been asked to come back in the spring or fall of 2007.

*"Frau Meyers, you
have touched my heart
in a deep, deep way."*



Lisa Meyers had an opportunity to play, sing, and share God's love with a group of Catholic women.

The Gospel Express

A train ride in Europe was the perfect witnessing opportunity.

By Mike Elwood

That was the most fun I've had sharing my faith in years, I thought, stepping off the train in Budapest. I had been on a prayer journey with GEM colleagues in the Czech Republic, where we learned that the Czechs are proud of their work ethic, their atheism, and their secular mindset. The extended time with God paved the way for my trip home.

I boarded the train in the Czech Republic, sitting in a cabin with room for six. My companions were two young women. Monika, a Lutheran Slovak medical student, began asking questions that allowed me to share my faith.

When I questioned Radka, a Czech, about the atheism of her country, she gladly confirmed what church leaders there had said. She asked what I hoped the prayer journey would accomplish. "I'd be pleased to see a shift from committed atheism to inquiring agnosticism as a good start toward faith," I said.

In Brno, three rowdy young men joined us. Radka, Monika, and I continued our conversation over their noise, and eventually they engaged in the discussion. They were Catholic Slovak medical students studying in the Czech Republic.

One of the guys, Alen, and Monika asked for my business card to continue communicating by email. I hope to put them in touch with some Czech ministries.

Everyone but Monika said this was the first time they'd encountered someone who was more interested in a personal relationship with God than in promoting religion. How empowering it was to sense the Spirit carrying this conversation!



Making Inroads

Our team's three weeks in Italy is making a long-term impact.

By Adam Springer



Teaching English gave Americans a chance to build relationships with Italian youth.

If our team had gone to Italy hoping to convert 20 people, that would've been an unreasonable goal. We didn't see anyone become a Christ-follower during our three-week trip—but we did make inroads into the youth community.

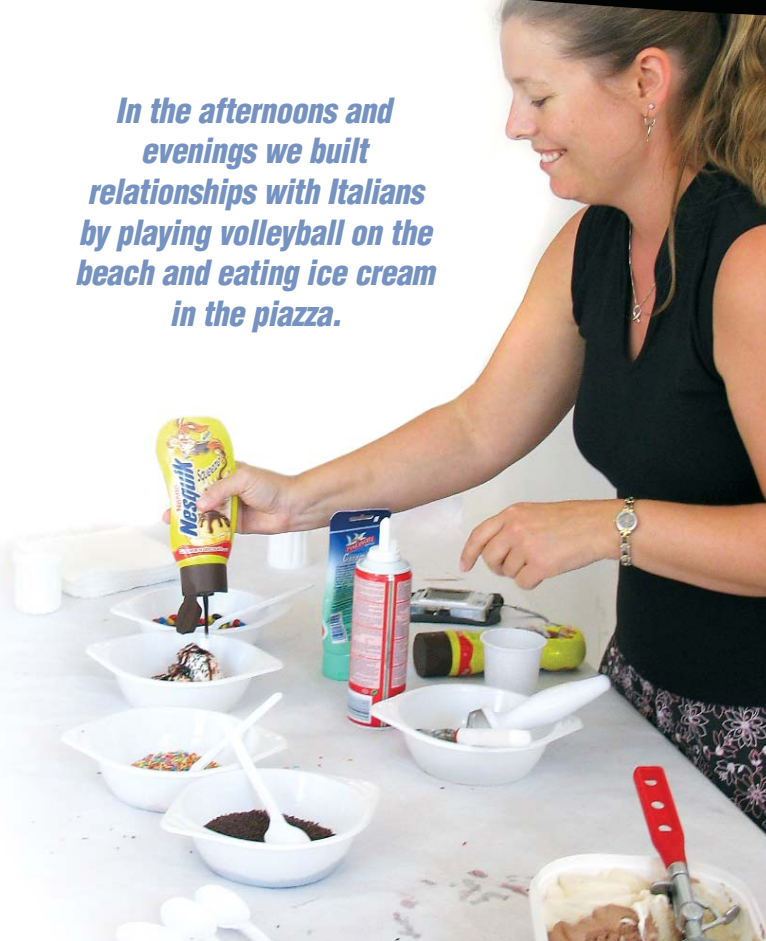
GEM missionary Amy Williams wants to draw young people to her church in Montefiascone. The believers there are joyful, but they're all under age nine or older than 30. Our nine-member team from California helped Amy put on two English camps to introduce youth to an evangelical church.

We spent the mornings teaching English. In the afternoons and evenings we built relationships with Italians by playing volleyball on the beach and eating ice cream in the piazza. We invited them to a free Pizza and Praise event at the church. That night the room was full, and the Italians seemed to really enjoy the worship. Amy said, "I had thought that it might be years before I would see that happen!"

I gave my testimony at the event, sharing that when I was younger, I went to church but it didn't mean anything to me. Afterward a student told me that most Italians are the same way; they say they're Christians and go to a Catholic church, but it's just tradition.

Our time in Italy accomplished a goal: Some members of our team keep in touch with the Italian students we met. Even more important, Amy has followed up with those who came to our events, and she's continuing a relationship with them.

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GEM missionary Amy Williams serves ice cream at an outreach event for Italians.

"Where Are the Christians?"

Germans are searching for spirituality—and finding it.

By Adam Gascho

Rolf and Susanne had spent several months visiting spiritual communities in Cologne, Germany, where religious groups range from Islamic to Catholic. Early last June Rolf commented to Susanne that they had looked into just about everything. "But where are the Christians?" he asked.

Shortly thereafter the couple noticed that the storefront near their apartment was being renovated. When they saw that it was now the "World Cup Café," they decided to pop in. At first they didn't realize that the people running the café were believers. In fact, our church-planting team was

partnering with other churches and ministries to run the café.

"As soon as we visited the café we felt that something was different."

"As soon as we visited the café we felt that something was different," Rolf later told us. He and Susanne were drawn back by this feeling and by the fact that their 6-year-old son enjoyed playing with the other kids while his parents watched soccer.

Before the World Cup was over, the family began attending our worship gatherings, and they continue to come. One evening they invited my wife Bethel and me to their apartment for dinner, and that began a weekly get-together where the four of us discuss God's Word.

Rolf and Susanne are so open and excited. "I've read about pretty much every religion, but now I think I'm finding the truth," Rolf says. Please pray that this family will understand God's Word and respond to Him.

Update: Peppo's Banquet

Upper-class Italians continue to study God's Word.

By Europe Today staff

A year ago God used GEM missionaries in Italy to "sow" His Word to 167 people. Peppo and Jane Biscarini organized a grand banquet for influential people who aren't easily reached with the Gospel message. At the end of the evening, more than 40 people responded to Peppo's invitation to receive Christ as Savior.

Peppo and Jane followed up and invited them to a Bible study. "Once the people realized that we were 'evangelicals,' not an extension of the Vatican, some of them didn't return," Peppo says.

Others didn't return because their spouses forbade them. "We had to work through persecution from those who do not understand what we are doing. Some of those who responded positively [at the banquet] were somewhat ridiculed or even threatened if they were to join us."

Peppo recognizes that when people are asked to make a commitment, only some are willing. Yet God is working.

"A remnant went on in the Bible studies, and our three studies continue to grow," Peppo says. A total of 45 people attend, half of whom joined after the banquet. Peppo and Jane trust that God will keep showing them how to minister among high-profile Italians. Their goal is that these people will understand God's Word and produce "a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown" (Matt. 13:23).



A year ago seven people attended Peppo and Jane Biscarini's Bible study; today 25 attend.

Editor's note: Read about "Peppo's Banquet" in the Winter 2006 issue of Europe Today (Vol. 1, No. 6) at www.GEMission.org/News/EuropetodayArchive.asp.

Celebrate through Sharing

Let GEM missionaries hear from you at this time of year.

As you prepare to celebrate Christ's birth and the gift of salvation this Christmas, please remember your missionaries in Greater Europe. They're in the midst of developing "... a witnessing fellowship within reach of every person."

During such a busy time of year, please take a moment to pray for your missionaries. The help you offer in this unseen way may be just what energizes them and encourages their hearts. And if you haven't sent them a year-end gift, please consider doing so by December 31.

This year, please prayerfully consider how you can help GEM missionaries point Europeans to the true meaning of Christmas: Jesus Christ.

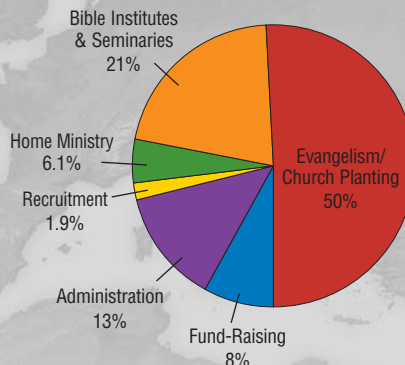
2006 ANNUAL REPORT

As of June 30, 2006 the Greater Europe Mission team included:

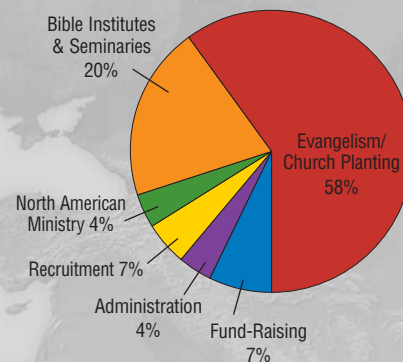
GEM Missionaries:	from the U.S.	from Canada
Total missionaries and staff	321	19
Missionaries assigned to Europe	287	14
Total missionaries preparing for the field	85	3
People who served two weeks to three months in Europe	192	35

For the complete U.S. financial report, please contact Sharon Boileau at SBoileau@VQAlliance.org or 800.436.4488. For the Canadian report, contact Susan Zerf at S_Zerf@GEMission.com or 866.241.3579.

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"Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together."

Psalm 34:3 (NIV)