

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO LEBANON...

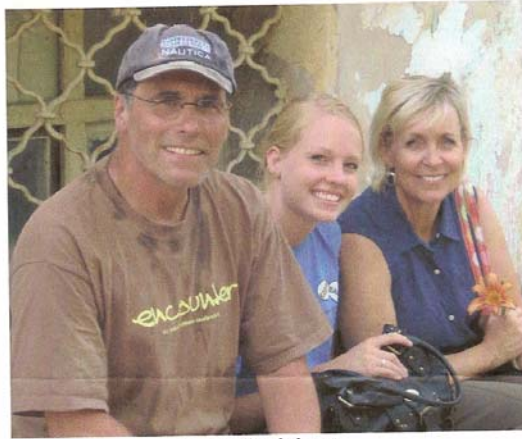


God took us to **SLOVAKIA!** Our team had to deal with the disappointment of not getting to the Middle East, but slowly adjusted (wonderfully) to God's "Plan B" for us to end up in Kosice, Slovakia. The majority of our students had preferred Lebanon because of their desire to share Christ with Muslims and a love for THAT country. So, you can imagine the sadness in our midst when we had to be re-routed. But we ended up keeping BOTH countries in our focus, by devoting our energies to actual outreach in Slovakia, and weekly prayer times for Lebanon. I guess it is POSSIBLE for your heart to be in 2 places at one time!

For years Julie has suggested Slovakia as a summer project location, since it is such a similar language and culture to Poland, - our home of 3 years back in the mid 80's. One of her desires was to reconnect with that area of the world, and it ended up being God's plan for us! As we were redirected to Eastern Europe, we all lived out the reality of Proverbs----"A man's heart plans his ways, but the Lord directs his steps/path."

The "nice" part about the door on Lebanon closing for us was being told we were a real answer to the prayers of the little team going to Slovakia! They needed us! Normally a team of 40, they had lost the bulk of their students, and were heading over with only a group of 10; so with our 15 added in, we made up a nice sized "work force!"

We found Slovakia to be a mixed bag of mostly questioning hearts towards the gospel, with a few bright spots of interest... So, mostly hard or "rocky" soil. One of the short term staff in Slovakia told me that the year had felt like "sowing seeds in a parking lot." Our experience was not too different from that. As a post Communist country there is a general mistrust and suspicion to any "new" message. Yet we did find some curiosity and tentative openness, for which we were grateful. We built friendships and trust, and planted seeds and shared the gospel. Now we have a long list of names we began a good work with, to hand over for follow up with the local staff team.



"Roma" ministry

Our actual ministry time in Kosice was divided between the university and high school English classes. We spent 2 weeks in each location with a "service day" squeezed in between. We invested our manual labor and lots of sweat to weeding, sweeping, hauling bricks and debris at a manor house that is being renovated for a ministry to the gypsy peoples of Europe, called the "Roma." When we left (sore and dirty to the bone!) the director told us we accomplished in one day what it would've taken him a year to do on his own!



Grace and Julie with Ariadna

Julie met Ariadna in a second hand store where our group was shopping for costumes for a skit. She heard Julie speaking English and asked if we were from the USA? She was going to be an exchange student there this coming year. To make a long story short, we hung out with her over the next 3 weeks, and... we will be her "host family" for the coming school year! (Pray for her, as she is not a believer yet!) SO... proof that Divine appointments CAN happen while you're shopping!

My best conversations were with an exchange student from Australia, Jonathan. We had some interesting conversations as he went from being an atheist to being open to talk about the gospel. Progress! Again, he kept hanging out with us, as we kept inviting him to - curious about us Christians and Christ. I will continue to email him. Much of our time felt like people just observing us, wondering about our faith, and trying it on for size.

We're glad to be back in our own beds, and resting up for a new year. In our next letter I'll share with you about my adventures in Korea at CM2007.

Hugh & Julie