

HIGHLIGHTS

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Jimmy Martin

Certainty in Uncertainty

Transition

Faulkner Elected as New
General Secretary

COVID-19

IBC Churches Online

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Certainty in Times of Uncertainty and Transition

*Yet this I call to mind and therefore have hope:
Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed,
For his compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.
I say to myself, The LORD is my portion;
Therefore I will wait for him. (Lamentations 3:21-24)*



by Jimmy Martin
General Secretary

It is true that light shines brightest in the darkness. If ever there were uncertain days, these are those days. As I write the coronavirus is setting the agendas and schedules of people and nations around the world. Unprecedented challenges to business, travel, finances, schooling, safety, politics, even communities of worship are requiring that we stop and reflect and adjust.

In International Baptist Convention churches and the IBC as a whole we are experiencing transition and uncertainty. We are being forced to rethink how we “do church.” Ministries, worship services, small groups, leadership meetings – everything is done remotely. We are being forced to remember what we already knew – the church is not a building but rather a family of believers.

YET is a big word. Did you notice it in the text above? The prophet Jeremiah was living in a time of national transition, tragedy, personal pain, disappointment, and grief. The book of Lamentations takes its name from the wailings of the prophet, who had watched his nation fall and the destruction of its capital Jerusalem. The life of the community was ended. Chapter 3 of Lamentations speaks of the suffering and tragedies and the resulting bitterness that had come upon the nation. Hopelessness was epidemic. Then comes the YET. A ray of hope springs forth. How was this possible? Because of the LORD’s “great love,” His “compassions” that never failed but instead were “new every morning.” Jeremiah hopefully confesses, “Great is your faithfulness.”

Now is the time when the church is given its opportunity to shine. Speaking with pastors and members of IBC churches, I have heard incredible stories of how God is using these troubling times to call people to Himself and to one another. People are going out of their ways to minister to hurting people like never before.

In a recent online leadership huddle made up of leaders of IBC churches, IBC President Tim Faulkner asked, “Are you frustrated or focused?” Pastors and other leaders shared about their initial frenzy of trying to move toward online sermons and worship services and putting discipleship and home groups on to social platforms like Zoom and Skype. Among the greatest challenges was pastoral care – how does the shepherd minister to the sheep in this day of physical distancing?

YET was a familiar refrain. Connecting and caring required creativity. Speaking for many, Paul Grinyer from Bremen, Germany, said: “I am surprisingly communicating more with people,” albeit in a different way than before. Pastors shared how church members were reaching out to one another, praying over the phone and over the internet. They were also reaching out to their neighbors in ways they had never done before, offering practical help where needed like shopping for groceries or walking pets or picking up mail. One of our pastors and his wife felt convicted to set aside money for small business people whose businesses were jeopardized. Families have found the time available to connect like never before.

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These acts of kindness and fellowship were prompted by God's "great love" and "compassion." We are learning during a time of challenge that God alone is our hope and salvation. The "lesser gods" that we tend to lean on and take for granted – health, wealth, status, abundance of whatever we need, freedom of travel – can be shattered during a time like the current pandemic. But God never fails to walk with us and to show His love and compassion. He is faithful. We will come out of the crisis not because WE are strong but because HE is strong and loving and compassionate. And HE is our portion – God is all we have and all we need in this time of uncertainty.

God is also our portion in times of transition.

Laurie and I are experiencing a time of transition right now. After more than 27 years in the IBC – 10 years as a pastor and 17 as the general secretary – we plan to return to the U.S. I announced my retirement two years in advance so the convention would have ample time to identify and call my successor. We formed a very diverse search team, which was led by Pastor Nick Howard. They completed their work by presenting Tim Faulkner as their candidate for the position.

Tim and Jacki are not new to the IBC. They have served in Italy as missionaries for many years, mostly in Naples. Tim served as pastor of IBC Naples, a church made up mostly of Italians and American military families. Tim currently serves as the IBC President and has been involved in our Executive Leadership Team for some years. The IBC, at a special called meeting, voted to call Tim to serve as the IBC General Secretary beginning in November. I plan to serve until the completion of our Annual Convention Meeting, 26-28 October, in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The final service of the ACM will be held in the Heidelberg Castle on 28 October.

From now until November, Tim and I will spend regular times discussing, planning, and praying about the future. He will speak with a louder voice

in upcoming meetings with the Executive Leadership Team as we plan for the future. God has been faithful to lead the IBC to a good place with a great future. He will be faithful to lead and empower us to fulfill the mission He has given us of "mobilizing and multiplying disciple-making churches."

Thomas Chisholm wrote one of my favorite hymns as a reflection of Jeremiah's words, spoken during a time of national and personal mourning and transition:

Great is thy faithfulness,
O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with thee;
Thou changest not,
thy compassions, they fail not;
As thou hast been
Thou forever will be.

Pardon for sin
And a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer
And to guide;
Strength for today
and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Great is thy faithfulness!
Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
And all I have needed thy hand hath provided;
Great is thy faithfulness,
LORD, unto me!

God really is faithful. I hope you discover this as you walk with the LORD during your days of uncertainty and transition. I hope your church is not giving in to despair, anger, or fear during these days. Instead, you are leaning on the everlasting arms of our faithful God.




Tim Faulkner Elected as New General Secretary

In a special on-line called meeting on 16 March, the International Baptist Convention overwhelmingly approved Tim Faulkner as the next General Secretary of the convention. Faulkner was presented as the candidate by the General Secretary Search Team after a 15-month search process.



Faulkner and his wife Jacki have served as missionaries in Italy for more than 20 years. Most recently they served as pastor and wife at Il Faro International Baptist Church in Naples until Tim passed the baton to Danilo Bozza last year. Tim has also been serving as IBC President for the past two years. Before the vote, Faulkner spoke about his vision for the convention:

- to improve our leaders
- to increase our capacity for disciple-making
- to innovate.

The change of general secretary, Faulkner said, will cause a temporary disruption that we can leverage to make these needed changes. We must continue to explore new ways of doing ministry because our world is changing rapidly and together we will find solutions that fit our context. 

Church Multiplication Networks Launched

The International Baptist Convention launched our brand new Church Multiplication Networks in April. Initially, we have one in Europe and one in Latin America... but of course we expect to multiply!

What are CMNs? CMNs exist to encourage, resource, facilitate, support, equip, involve, and challenge churches to plant churches that will plant church-planting churches.



Who are CMNs for? CMNs are for EVERYONE...parent church leaders, church planters, church plant team members, church leaders who want to help, partner churches, and anyone else with a desire to play a role in seeing churches multiplying more and more disciple-making churches.

Our CMNs are gathering online once a month to share their church's multiplication plans and efforts, learn together, encourage one another, develop disciple-making competencies and leadership effectiveness, and much more. Partnering together brings immediate benefits to participants personally, to their churches, and to the churches being planted.

Our CMNs also have opportunities to learn, encourage, and work together face-to-face in regional gatherings. Some of our CMN regional gatherings will be to partner

together to assess potential church planters, conduct training on targeted subjects, or conduct feasibility studies among other things.

CMNs will play a significant role in achieving our

three-fold vision for church multiplication:

1. Invite every IBC church into church multiplication.


This is an *invitation* to partner with others for progress in church planting.

2. Support and encourage every IBC church with their multiplication efforts.

This is a *promise* that we will do all we can to come alongside of you and your church to partner with you for progress in church planting.

3. Celebrate all multiplication efforts.

This is an *opportunity* for us to celebrate all that God will do in our partnership and progress.

Let's partner together for progress in church multiplication! 

Darryl Evetts

Director of Church Multiplication

Women's Conference Now Set for September

Like many countries, Spain is on lockdown because of COVID-19. Due to the unknown of how long these restrictions will be in place, the IBC Women's Team prayerfully decided to reschedule the IBC Women's Conference and not cancel it.

Good news: if you have already registered, you can still hang on to your registration and join us 25-27 September 2020 in Madrid. We'll have lots of coronavirus-season stories to tell.

If you had not registered for the April conference but would like to come in September, registration is open on our website.

If you have a unique situation and are not able to attend in September, please send the team an email (teamwomenibc@gmail.com) as soon as possible. You can also swap your registration with someone from your church. They will then pay you directly.



You are not alone in this. The Women's Team is here to walk alongside you. "We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps" (Proverbs 16:9). We know it can be disheartening to diligently plan in advance and have it all thwarted last minute. What an opportunity to honor God not only with our lips, but with our living too.

Let us all unite in faith and show the prince of this world that nothing can steal our passion and perseverance for Jesus or our determination to meet. We are better together.

If you have any questions regarding our conference (not the virus), please the IBC Women's Team know. They are more than happy to assist.

Keep Calm, Pray On, and Wash Your Hands.

IBC Women's Team

Opportunity Lost, Opportunity Gained, Discovering IBC Churches Online

Up with the moon, I only see dark through the window. Thankfully Tim is an early bird and already has the coffee ready. This is part of our new Sunday rhythm.

If we were in Italy, Sunday would find us at Il Faro International Baptist Church. Being in the U.S. as missionaries on home assignment, we'd usually visit a different supporting church each week. Coronavirus had other plans.

What has corona lockdown meant for us in regard to going to church? Like many, we miss being able to physically go to church, being able to hug and kiss our fellow church members (we're from Italy don't forget), being able to hear worship songs lifted up in community. But on the flip side lockdown has given us a unique opportunity to worship with other IBC church families, in different countries, in different time zones. We start early in the morning in order to catch a livestream or two from Europe, then worship with several others via their video upload method of choice, and finally finish with a congregation on this side of the ocean. In our four weeks of online worship we've been able to visit quite a few of our IBC church families spread across Europe and Latin America.

The idea of "attending" five or six services every Sunday might seem a bit much, but it really has been an encouragement. Part of the value of the local church is the reinforcement it gives to the idea of being part of a body; nobody walks in faith alone. Especially in this time of needing to be distanced, it is refreshing to be together virtually with other believers, reminding ourselves that we are part of something bigger. Living this kind of Sunday has also helped the day stand out as different from the blursday (borrowed from my friend's hashtag) the rest of the week tends to become.

One aspect that has stood out to us is the uniqueness of each congregation in living out church in the midst of corona. We've seen services filmed live at the moment, pre-recorded and uploaded, and even in a live chat format via Zoom; music has also varied from a single guitarist playing live, a worship team (appropriately distanced of course) pre-recording, to embedded YouTube videos. The media platforms might also change, depending on what subscriptions each church has and their level of experience. Bottom line, there's no one right way to do a service which we already knew, but now get to appreciate

in a new way.

After four weeks of social-distanced Sunday services, we have come away with an appreciation for the IBC on a new level, having seen how each church in the convention has risen to the challenge. Already in the first week of lockdown, IBC pastors and leaders were finding innovative ways to meet virtually. That's not to be taken for granted – just yesterday we were "with" a church in the U.S. meeting together for their first time in a month and not even for a ser-



vice, it was simply a chat group. The speed at which our churches went virtual has also meant the Gospel message getting out to more people since video links are easily shared. The IBC churches have also been very good at leveraging the talents of their members for graphics, for tech support, or for creatively meeting physical and emotional needs of the congregation. It seems that the varied and transient nature of our international churches which can sometimes seem a hurdle to overcome has actually positioned the IBC to adapt fairly quickly in this unprecedented time.

There is a part of me that would prefer to rise with the sun rather than the moon, but I really am thankful for this odd sort of blessing that corona lockdown has provided us. I think it will be interesting to see how God uses these times to continue to strengthen the IBC family we love and grow their outreach and influence.

Jacki Faulkner

Whispers of Faith in Exile



by Garrett Starr
Pastor, Faith Baptist
Church, Kaiserslautern,
Germany

I remember a police officer once telling me about a strategy that he used to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations on the job. While others are involved in an altercation, which inherently means loud, he would enter into the conflict and purposely speak in a markedly lower register. It would take a minute or two, but invariably those in conflict would have to lower their voices and even stop speaking in order to hear what the officer was saying as he spoke in a whisper. If we have ears to hear it, a similar thing is happening now in the midst of the clamor surrounding COVID-19. Indeed, while a seemingly infinite number of news reports, infection and death toll updates, and complaints on social media about people having to spend their days at home with their family members are quickly becoming white noise to which many are becoming immune, another change is also quietly becoming apparent among the people of God as we face days of uncertainty.


In increasing expressions of thankfulness to the Lord, the people of God, whom we define as those who have repented of their sin and placed saving faith in Jesus Christ, are recognizing the manifold blessings of God that we may have taken for granted. Firstly, there are whispers about the restoration of the centrality of the family in all that God has created in human society. Family mealtime, family devotional time, family game time, family prayer time, times with family, family, family, are being recovered and recognized for what they are: precious gifts from God that we have perhaps squandered or failed to appreciate for too long.

Secondly, there are whispers about the power and authority and ministry of the Word of God to the people of God. There seems to be a growing recovery of the infallibility, inerrancy, and immutability of Scripture that is encouraging, convicting, and strengthening the body of Christ. Truly, this oft-neglected book of all books is being discovered anew

by believers who have mercifully had the necessary distractions of life removed, at least for a season. In sum, the Word of God is becoming precious again to the people of God.


Thirdly, there are whispers about the eternal sovereignty of God. While the world cries out for answers, the followers of Jesus Christ are expressing the deep and abiding rest that we have in knowing that the Lord our God is sovereign over all the affairs of human beings. It is not in ignorance that we may rest soundly as the coronavirus continues to spread around the world. Rather, our gentle rest is the result of hearts that find great solace in the truth that the Lord our God, Who was, Who is, and Who is to come, sovereignly ordains all that comes to pass in human history, including these days of global pandemic. His perfect will continues to unfold for the blessing and benefit of the saints.

Finally, there are whispers about the love and appreciation of covenant partners for one another. While many husbands and wives may have lost each other in the hectic pace of life before the pandemic, now in the wake of required isolation, after the shock of seeing each other much more than they were used to, husbands and wives are now growing in genuine appreciation for each other, love and thankfulness for one another, and the desire to serve and bless their spouses. There is a realization and a restoration of the importance of covenant marriage among the followers of Christ.

In the final measure of this global pandemic, once the plan of God in this circumstance has unfolded, I pray that the ministry of the Spirit of God to us in this time will not be lost with the return of the old normal. If we are able to remember and hold as precious all that the Lord has taught us in these days, I dare say that we will find that His Spirit has been teaching us the entire time if only we have ears to hear His divine whisper as we live out our faith in exile. 

Euroventure Cancelled for 2020

The Euroventure Team has made the hard decision to cancel camp for 2020. This was difficult because we are always in awe of what God does at camp and the incredible experience of many teens placing their faith in Jesus for the first time or re-committing their lives to Christ.

Watch for information on a virtual hangout during the week of 4-10 July. 



Helping Church Planters in Turkey

Editor's Note: The International Baptist Convention is in partnership with Pastor Ertan Cevik and the Turkish Baptist Alliance through the European Baptist Mission International. Part of the IBC's Global Missions Offering for the past two years has gone to the Turkish Baptist Alliance and to the Adana Refugee Project through EBM. The IBC is also a member of the European Baptist Federation and participates in the EBF's Mission Partnerships, sponsoring church planters in Latvia and Albania.

At the end of 2019, Daniel Trusiewicz, EBF Mission Coordinator, and Oeds Blok, an experienced church planter in The Netherlands who coaches others, conducted a conference for church planters in Turkey. Trusiewicz and Blok were joined by Jelle van Luipen, a member of the Baptist church in Leidsche Rijn, The Netherlands.

Twenty church planters and pastors participated in the conference. Pastor Ertan Cevik, welcomed the participants and led in a Bible reflection on Psalm 126.

The program began with an overview of church planting in Eastern Europe and the Middle East as well as some aspects of the work among refugees in Western Europe. In the second session, participants discussed the important criteria that a church planter should have: accepting a personal call, building a team, having a vision and determining a target group, building relationships with mentors/coaches, and developing supporting partnerships. All of these would help avoid numerous mistakes.



Participants at the conference for church planters.

Blok's presentations concentrated on the pioneering aspect of a church planter. Using the example from Acts 10, he emphasized that communication of the Gospel requires openness to others and an ability to build bridges. During his second session, he used Acts 20:17-38 to talk about the importance of personal growth. He also referenced the book *The Undefended Leader* by Simon Walker which discusses the different aspects of a personal ego. Blok encouraged the participants to be aware of their temptations and how to face them properly.

Local leaders shared some advice based on their experiences. They pointed out that the Christian church is like a family and that new people that join




Blok, Trusiewicz, van Luipen

must be cared for. Preparation for baptism requires time and good teaching. Only then will the congregation experience a steady growth. New members ought to be diligently disciplined. Leaders, too, need mentors to prosper in ministry. Personal relationships are indispensable to encourage others and to overcome any prejudice against strangers. A leaders also needs to have knowledge of local laws to function effectively.

The atmosphere of the conference was very good. The participants were active and attentive, the translation was excellent, and the breaks offered opportunity for interaction. At the end of the conference, Cevik thanked the speakers and invited them to do a similar conference in the future.

After the conference there was a baptism of a Turkish believer in the Black Sea that participants were invited to witness. The church is located on the seashore so anybody could observe Pastor Orhan baptizing a young man.

After the conference, Trusiewicz wrote: "I, together with my Dutch friends, spent a great time of fellowship and ministry in Turkey. We admired the fervent faith and sincere dedication of local leaders to make Christ known among the people in Turkey as well as the loving care of the Iranian/Syrian refugees. They virtually embody the Gospel and their attitude is contagious." 

Adapted from report by Daniel Trusiewicz

Prayer requests:

1. Pray for the many people who visit the churches that God will touch their hearts.
2. Pray for spiritual growth and maturity of the church members.
3. Pray for the local Christians who help refugees spiritually and economically.

Introducing the Aquila Initiative for Traini



by Stephen D. Campbell
Pastor, IBC Bonn, Germany,
and Academic Director at
Aquila Initiative

In the summer of 2017 my wife and I came to Bonn, Germany, for a three-month research exchange. I was working on my Ph.D. and our family plans were clear: go to England for a Ph.D. and get back to the U.S. Above all the plan was to get hired in a nice and safe academic job, stay clear of the ministry.

But in all His humor, the Lord had other plans for the Campbells. That summer, Beth and I met David Martin, pastor of IBC Cologne, and became fast friends with him and his family. It was that year that the idea for an NGO called Aquila Initiative was taking root in his mind and a few other men in IBC Cologne. The concept intrigued me as did David's plans for planting a church in Bonn.

Over the next two year we kept in touch, and as is God's pattern, despite our best-laid plans, my family and I moved back to Bonn on 27 August 2019. This time, however, we came with no plans to go back to the U.S. We moved this time because I had accepted an offer for full-time employment as academic director at Aquila Initiative. On top of this, I am also serving as pastor of that now one-year-old church plant, IBC Bonn.

Over these past years, God has been at work leading and directing the Aquila team. This has required a lot of faith, patience, and trust. But we believe Aquila is finally at a point that we would like to tell the IBC community about it and ask you to pray for us and to pray about how you and your church might partner with us to train up more church planters for Europe.

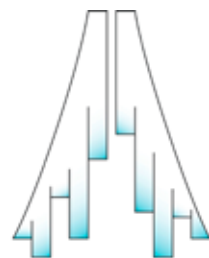
THE VISION

The *vision* of Aquila Initiative is "to establish a network of like-minded churches who partner together to engage in church multiplication by apprenticing leaders who will establish community through marketplace missions." Contained within this vision statement are the three pillars that make up our method of sustainable church planting: Ministry Partnerships, Practical Apprenticeships, and Engaging the Marketplace. Aquila believes that what is needed in Europe is leaders who are able to sustainably fund their church planting efforts with the support of a network of local churches.

MINISTRY PARTNERSHIPS

In order to address the colossal need for more Bible-believing, church-planting churches in Europe, many different efforts will be required, and the most

successful will utilize strategic partnerships. Aquila, too, is working to develop partnerships both in Germany and abroad (U.S., Canada, Romania, and the U.K. to name a few). Although some of these partnerships include financial support, we envision our partnerships extending far beyond this.



AQUILA INITIATIVE

We are developing partnerships with *individuals* to serve as mentors (our apprentices will each have three), academics, business advisors, and prayer partners; with *churches* to sponsor church-planting teams to be trained by us and mission teams to aid our churches here in the Rhineland; with *universities* to give oversight and

accreditation to our program; and with *non-profit organizations* to assist us in developing our curriculum and extend our influence.

All of this is done within the context and for the benefit of the local church. Classes, seminars, and lectures will be open to the public. Our apprentices will be serving and gaining experience within our churches. They will be preaching, teaching, discipling, attending elders' meetings, etc., etc., etc. By the time they leave, we will know they are competent for ministry because they have demonstrated that they are competent, not because they have taken our classes.

PRACTICAL APPRENTICESHIPS

The second foundational element of Aquila Initiative is the training of these marketplace missionaries through an apprenticeship. We call this the Aquila Institute. The apprenticeship includes training in Bible, theology, ministry, and (most distinctively) entrepreneurship. This approach suits the vision of training marketplace missionaries because it allows us to provide students with practical experience within the context of local churches that will both prepare them for a lifetime of ministry and equip them to help support themselves for years.

In many cases, these apprentices will live here in the Bonn/Cologne region, but in other cases an apprentice will stay in his/her home church elsewhere in Europe while going through the Aquila Institute. Apprentices will have three mentors, one of whom will be based in the church where he/she is serving. Together these mentors will each ensure that the apprentice has demonstrated competency before being sent out to plant a new church.

Importantly, this apprenticeship model fits the context in which we serve. According to the Federal Statistical Office of Germany only around 40% of

ng Marketplace Missionaries

German students will take the university entrance exam (the *Abitur*). The majority of the remaining students will enter the workforce through an apprenticeship (*Ausbildung*). This includes those entering nursing, banking, management, realty, and many other fields. So, in our European context, a practical apprenticeship approach is both recognized and seen by the wider population as an effective mode for training.

ENGAGING THE MARKETPLACE

Across the globe there is a growing interest in what is called by some, Business as Mission. Related terms include Marketplace Missions and Tentmaking Missions. These terms reflect a growing desire among secularly employed Christians to use their skills within the marketplace to advance the Gospel of Christ. This can mean going abroad to teach English in a country unfavorable toward Christianity and the church or staying in one's home country and being an intentional Gospel witness in a secular job.

Because of the many challenges that face church planters in Western Europe (including the cost of living and the cultural malaise toward the Gospel), Aquila is convinced that training marketplace missionaries and church planters is not only an exciting opportunity for a more sustainable ministry but also presents exciting opportunities for reaching the lost with the Gospel.

We at Aquila call this Business in Mission, a multiplication of small businesses as a means of marketplace ministry offering Christ-exalting community. The goal is to be the salt and light in different communities by sharing and living out faith in Jesus Christ. The hope for every new business endeavor is that Bible study groups and (eventually) churches will be established through the Gospel impact of these Businesses in Mission. The desire of Aquila Initiative is to train and equip teams of church planters to start new businesses that reach their communities for Christ and assists in their church-planting efforts.

EARLY SIGNS OF FRUIT

To be clear, Aquila has not yet opened a Business in Mission, and we have not yet started teaching any apprentices in any official capacity. We are still laboring with God to lay the foundation for what is to come. Before arriving here in Germany, I was advised by

a seminary dean in the U.S. to take two years to develop the Aquila Institute program. We are trying to do it in almost half that time. We are praying that God would open doors so that we can begin our own Business in Mission by the end of summer 2020. But this does not mean that we have not seen fruit from our labors yet. In that, God has been extremely kind and generous to us.

First, in 2018 Aquila began assisting a church planting effort in Bonn and on 22 September 2019, I was installed as its pastor. Secondly, we have been greatly encouraged by the positive feedback we have received on our concept and the progress that we are making in moving forward with our institute. In fact, it appears likely that we will be able to offer a fully accredited M.A. degree by the time our first apprentices begin enrolling. Thirdly, we have developed a partnership with a church in Texas that has already scheduled its first mission trip to come and train/assist IBC Cologne and IBC Bonn in evangelism and outreach. Fourthly, we are already beginning to plan our first conference on the topic of marketplace missions. This will be open to anyone who is interested and will be a great encouragement to our churches and communities. Fifthly, as our academic program takes shape, these seminars will also be open to our churches. For all of these blessings we praise God alone.

CALL TO ACTION

Without a doubt the thing we need most is prayer! We are undertaking a mammoth task, and we need prayer for endurance, patience, increased faith, and an eschatological vision. Secondly, we ask you to pray and discern how the Lord might be leading you or your church to partner with us. Do you have expertise that you can share? Do you have individuals in your church that would be good candidates for church planting but need training? Do you have interest in lecturing or mentoring apprentices? Do you have individuals in your church that would be interested in learning more about Aquila? Finally, we are praying that the Lord would provide the finances required for Aquila to be freed from the need to raise funds in the future. We are praying for fiscal sustainability and the financial capacity to invest in the entrepreneurial endeavors of apprentices. All of this is possible with our God. To Him be the glory!

Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! (Psalm 115:1)



CONNECT WITH AQUILA INITIATIVE

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Panama City, Panama

LIFEBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL Church, Panama City, Panama, held their Leadership Link Conference, 6-7 March. It was a time for encouragement and equipping where the volunteers of LifeBridge spent the time digging into the Word and looking at what leadership looks like from a biblical perspective and how each person can practically use their skills to serve in the church.

The two-day retreat served as a time of renewal for the leadership team of Life-

Bridge and a time for unity among all who call LifeBridge home during this season of their lives.

A group from Calvary Chapel of Central Bucks, Pennsylvania, came to be the guest speakers for the event and continue their partnership with LifeBridge. It was mutually edifying time. Calvary Chapel is one of the supporting churches of Nate and Jendi Korpi, pastor of LifeBridge. 

Jendi Korpi



Portimao, Portugal

Give thanks to the Lord; call on His name; make known among the nations what He has done. Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always. (Psalm 105:1,4)

WHAT A GREAT PSALM this is, reminding us of how much God has done for us and our responsibility to make that message known; then also with it the reminder that our strength comes from Him alone and we should seek His face constantly. What great verses for this new year!

We praise the Lord for all His love and provision for us and we are grateful for all the opportunities over the Christmas season to make His love known both at International Christian Fellowship Baptist Church, Portimão, Portugal and in practical ways in the community.


The month of December was packed full of Christmas activities and ministry opportunities. It began with a lunch for all the helpers at our soup kitchen, where about 30 people gathered. Many of these helpers are not Christians, and so there are many opportunities to make friends and share our faith. Ursula, our soup kitchen cook, came with us to our Christmas carol service at church for the first time.

Our annual Christmas dinner at the soup kitchen went well. We fed a roast dinner to approximately 80 people and gave them all a bag of gifts that included a Gospel of Luke, a pen with a Bible verse inscribed on it, chocolate and personal toiletries.

Our soup kitchen ministry has been going for 10 years now and is always full of opportunities to witness to people. A few

weeks ago, a couple came in who were really desperate and asking for help. They had no food, nowhere to live, were sleeping rough, and were expecting a baby. As we talked with them, we discovered that they had come down to the Algarve in the summer for work, but their jobs had finished at the end of the tourist season and they hadn't been paid for their last month of work. They were really hungry and had nothing – just the clothes on their backs. We discovered that they had family in Lisbon so we told them we could offer to buy their bus tickets home. The tears rolled their down their faces, and they hugged each other in excitement. They were so grateful. As we took them to the bus, we gave them a Portuguese Bible and a little book called "Who is Jesus?" We explained that Jesus is the whole reason we are here and why our soup kitchen exists. The Lord has done so much for us that we want to share His love with others.

These past 12 months our church has also been helping a girls' home in Portimão that was struggling to provide for 40 girls, ages 5-21. Since a local supermarket is now donating unsellable food to our soup kitchen, we are able to share our blessing by passing on extra food to the girls, who are most grateful. At Christmas we also took them gifts that were bought by our church members and soup kitchen helpers.

May the Lord bless you in this new year and use you for His glory. 

David & Joy Borgan



ICF Portimao serves 80 at their Christmas soup kitchen dinner.

Darmstadt, Germany

MY JOURNEY WITH CHRIST

Hello, my name is Kasja Sadler. I am 15 years old and was recently baptized at Converge International Fellowship in Darmstadt, Germany. I would like to tell you about my story with Christ.

As a child I always believed in God and Jesus. I always knew why we celebrated Christmas and Easter. But that was mainly because it was all I knew. My parents are Christians, so I learned from them. There was never a doubt in my mind that God wasn't real.

But a few months ago, my parents started really following Jesus and building a relationship with Him. I began to see a real difference in them. They were happier than usual, more peaceful, and more patient, and they just changed how they lived their everyday life. Not that there was none of that before, but it was just so much more.

That's when I decided to start building a relationship with Jesus too.

At first, I found it difficult to find time in my day to read my Bible. And when I did, I felt like I was just reading the words that were on the paper and not really feeling anything. So, I got demotivated and stopped for a couple weeks. My parents then saw I needed help and asked me if I wanted to start getting up at 5 a.m. every morning before school for Bible study. I really didn't want to get up that early, but I set about five alarms every night to make sure I got up!

Starting my day with the Lord showed me how much of a difference it can make. I then looked forward, not to getting up early, but to spending time with Christ. I still had the feeling that I didn't have the Holy Spirit like my parents had, where God would speak to them and really touch their hearts just by reading the Scripture. This time I didn't want to give up though. I kept on track and prayed a lot.

About a week later my family and I went to church and that's when I met Pastor Kent Staton. The way he preached and shared the Word of God really moved me. I definitely learned a whole lot from him, but I still felt I didn't have the Holy Spirit so I asked him about it and if there was

anything I was doing wrong.

He told me that there isn't really a "correct" way to pray or read the Bible, but to just pray before I read the Bible and ask God to help me hear what He was trying to tell me. I then did that every time before I read and soon I found myself crying about something I already knew from when I was a kid: "Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us" (Ephesians 2:18).



Pastor Kent Staton baptizes Kasja Sadler.

This was my first Holy Spirit moment! That verse helped me remember what Christ did for me, something that cannot be forgotten or overlooked. Because of Him I am able, even with all my sins, to stand before our God Almighty and be forgiven and welcomed to His kingdom.

That moment was also the one that really opened my eyes and made it clear that I should completely give my life and everything I do and think to Jesus. I accepted Him as my Lord and Savior.

I decided, not long after that to get baptized. So I asked Pastor Kent that following Sunday if he could set it up and of course he was more than happy to. About 4 weeks later it was the day I was so excited for. I thought I wasn't going to be nervous at all, which I wasn't up until the last 30 minutes. My mom gave me some real-

ly good advice to go to the changing room about 10 minutes before the baptism and spend that time with God. So I did, asking God to calm my nerves and to help me not freeze up like I do, especially because I had to answer the pastor's questions in front of everybody. And guess what? God helped me out and all of my nerves were gone and I knew exactly what to say. When I was lifted back out of the water, I really did feel like my old self was being washed away. At that moment I was com-

pletely at peace and I felt so much joy.

I now feel stronger with God than ever, and I don't want to give that up. So I continue to get up in the mornings, I think about God in everything I do, and I even started discipling one of my closest friends. Jesus sacrificed His life for my sins, and I want to try my hardest to show Him just how thankful I am.

I now can see that I don't have to be on my knees crying to have the Holy Spirit – I've had Him all along. He has done things in my life, big things that I didn't see before, but now I do. I am just so grateful for everything He has done for me in the past and what He holds for me in the future.

Kasja Sadler

Stuttgart, Germany

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)

ON 12 JANUARY, the International Baptist Church of Stuttgart, Germany, held their first worship service in their new building. In the week leading up to the day, a large group of volunteers helped with the final preparations: cleaning; painstakingly attaching felt pads underneath every chair and table leg; setting up the chairs and tables in the sanctuary and other rooms; and doing a final systems check with the audio and lighting.

Pastor David Packer writes: “Then – at long last – we held our regular two services, at 9:30 and 11:30, in the new building. And it was packed! We even had to set up some chairs on the balcony, which we had initially planned to keep closed. However everything ran smoothly, and it was such an amazing experience for us to



IBC Stuttgart celebrates in their new building.

finally be there.

“It was a special day for our church. For many years we have been praying, planning, and giving for this new church building. We, first of all, praise and thank God for His leadership and faithfulness during these years. We are building this

house for Him, out of a sense of His leadership to do so, for His glory and renown, and for His purposes – the expansion of the Church and the increase of our own ministry here for Him. This is His house, and we are His people.”

Kaiserslautern, Germany

SINCE JOINING the International Baptist Convention community, and particularly Faith Baptist Church in Kaiserslautern, Germany, I have heard the term “American Bubble” spoken in reference to our congregation. It’s true. Ninety percent of our congregation is American. Eighty percent of that 90% are U.S. military or U.S. government contractors. Because there is such a large American presence here, the German community quickly reverts to English when we go anywhere locally. If we are “dying” for our favorite American fast food, we can ask anyone in our church to get us on base for our fix. It seems like a dreamy ministry – no language barriers, no cultural hurdles to overcome.

Well, I hate to *POP* the bubble, but here is the reality. We say goodbye, all the time. A part of our Sunday Service includes the question, “Is this anybody’s last Sunday?” When people visit for the first time, we go through a casual conversation about how long they have been in the area, where are they from, how long before they PCS (military lingo for move). The conversation gets us mentally prepared for how much time we will have to pour into this family before they are gone.

Summers are brutal. We lose one third of our congregation every summer. And then we lose several more families in the late fall. And then, a smattering of families move in the winter.

One of the great blessings of military families is that they cherish the moments they have. Those that serve, serve with gusto. The various ministries within the church are in constant flux. Just when a team starts getting into a groove and working well together, someone moves on. This summer a third of the women’s ministry team is moving. The Awana Commanders and a third of the leaders are leaving. The mission’s leader and her Sunday School teacher husband. Gone. The administrator and the lead teacher at our School. Gone. Our financial secretary. Gone. And right now, our personnel team is down to one member. He’s going to be busy.

Our people do the most that they can with the demanding work schedules that are set before them in the European Theatre. We are usually well staffed for mid-week programs. The difficulty lies on Sundays. This community celebrates all of the American holidays. There are several four-day weekends throughout the year,

and everyone gets vacation time. We do live in Europe. There are many beautiful places to explore. And they are only here for a few years ... But, a sweet blessing that we are discovering is second assignments. Those are the families who leave but get reassigned here several years later. It’s nice. They know the drill and are willing to step in.

So, upon our one-year anniversary here in Germany, the women’s ministry will again host a “Farewell to Friends” dinner at a local German Restaurant. Last year I was too new to understand the significance of the event. This year it will be different. I’ve made friends. I have to say goodbye this time. Uncle Sam is going to send these families out into the world. Did we disciple them enough? Did we help them connect to this overseas family? Did we pour into them the gospel of Jesus Christ? I know I will cherish the connections we’ve made, and I praise God for the time we’ve been given to show the love of Christ to these U.S. military families. *POP*

Risa Starr