

Surprised By Hope

The title caught my eye as I scanned my friend's bookshelf recently. "Maybe I should read this one," I thought. I took it down and started reading.

Hope is not something the world has in abundance these days: Wars, mass shootings, cultural divisions, unveiled hatred, they're all evidence that point to the fact that everything is not alright. Over the month of May, Jayne and I contributed to the MEI blogpost and wrote about conversations that Jesus had with people between his resurrection and his ascension. As is usually the case, I think we gained the most in the process as we focused on the root of our hope, the resurrection of Jesus. Hope tethered to the Savior by his triumph over sin and death is a source of great comfort and peace in these tenuous times.

But it's easy to lose sight of that which tethers us to Jesus. The wars, shootings, divisions, and hatred may be the context we live in today, but the hopelessness or powerlessness we may feel emanates from something much more personal. It's the family members and loved ones who have died, the friends who are divorcing, the workplace that's discouraging, the kids who are having a hard time finding their way – it *seems* as though Jesus' resurrection doesn't even touch on these painful places. So, what do we do when confronted with perplexing situations and paradoxical circumstances? "For God so loved the world . . ." but the world is really a mess!

In June, we returned to Hungary where we took part in two conferences – the first was a gathering of all our fellow Ministry Essentials staff. It was a great time to be refreshed in the Word together, to get to sing and laugh together. But the highlight each day was hearing from each person/couple how the Lord was working in their lives and then taking time to pray with them. One of the recurring themes was that life is messy, *and God is at work.*



The second was a Barnabas Zentrum (BZ) Retreat that we lead for six missionaries – two couples and two singles (see their "beautiful feet" at right). The group bonded quite quickly as we spent many hours over the first two days hearing people's life stories – all of which reinforced that life is messy - *and God is at work!* All six were in some stage of transition, grieving the circumstances that had gotten them there, and looking for God to show them the way forward.

One of the ways we're learning to deepen our faith and move forward with God when He seems silent, is to look to Jesus' experience of the Father as he hung on the cross. When he cried out to the Father from the cross, there was no booming voice, "This is My beloved Son...." there was no descending dove, there was only silence. But Jesus' faith in His Father through the process teaches us what true faith looks like in times of silence and darkness. Remember, Jesus had never died before – this was a new experience for him that took true faith! Peter tells us that *Jesus kept entrusting himself to the One who judges righteously.*

Thank you for your prayers for us and for the missionaries and pastors we're able to care for during times like this! We also pray for you; please let us know if there are specific ways you are journeying in darkness or silence. Please pray for our upcoming trip to Croatia and Macedonia Sept. 6th - 26th. We'll be visiting missionaries and holding a 10-day BZ Retreat for two more couples and two singles.

As always, we couldn't be doing this without you. Thank you!

Scott and Jayne

A family update:

As the kids have grown up and left the home, we haven't written much about them, so we thought we'd take some space and say a few words about what they're up to these days.

Sofie graduated from Calvin University in Grand Rapids in 2021 with a degree in Social Work, and for the last year has been working at a job she loves with "Justice For Our Neighbors" in Grand Rapids. JFON provides legal services to under-resourced immigrants. As one who grew up in a foreign country herself, she loves getting to help those who don't always know the best ways to get help.

Emma and Daniel live about 15 minutes away from us with our two grandsons, Adrian (3) and Alistair (14 months). Emma is a cosmetologist working at a hair salon and Daniel works Daxko, doing customer support.

Sam and Natalie recently moved to Fairbanks, AK, where Sam is a medic at Eielson AFB. They have a very mobile 15-month-old, Isla, and are having a boy (Silas?) in late October. We're planning to head up to visit them in November. Brrr.

Shay is still living in Memphis, TN, but after 5 years of teaching high school science, she found a job as a genetic counselling assistant and will apply to grad school studying genetic counselling next fall.

Jack and Sarah are still living in Brooklyn with Liv (5). Jack is teaching science, Sarah is working for Mastoloni Pearls, and Liv is just starting K5. They all LOVE living in the city!

Tyler and Rachel live about 10 minutes away – he's working as the Technical Director at Covenant Pres. here in Birmingham, and Rachel is an accountant with Alabama Power.

So, if you follow the geography, the kids are spread out from Alaska to New York and from Michigan to Alabama – making a big "cross" across the U.S. 😊