



The Hamley Herald

November 2010



This Just In: God Is Faithful!

We are often amazed at the ways God moves seemingly immovable obstacles and changes hearts in order to accomplish His will. Right at this moment, we are living out two very powerful and exciting examples of exactly this. First, after two miscarriages and years of waiting and praying, we are looking forward to the late-January arrival of our first child. As Carrie's belly continues to grow, we are becoming more and more excited about our new family! Our "Little Bean" is apparently a healthy baby, and we're looking forward to meeting him soon!

The second example is just as surprising and likewise a blessing—we hope for ourselves and many others. Within a month, we will be moving to a new mission field, answering a call to a place where our skills and talents will be put to much use for God's kingdom.

Going Where God Leads

If someone had told us even a few months ago that we would soon be picking up and moving to Belgium, we probably would have laughed. Yet if there is one thing we have learned on the mission field, it is to expect the unexpected and to follow God's leading wherever it may take you. Allow us to explain...

Back in early May, fellow FM missionaries, Dick and Sheila Dickinson, came to Madrid to put on a children's leadership workshop and visit to see the work of the church here. We met them at this time and enjoyed getting to know them. Soon they returned to Belgium, where some surprises awaited them.

Some of the greatest response to the Gospel there is to be found among Spanish-speaking immigrants, yet the FMC has no one in Belgium who speaks Spanish, and few of the immigrants speak more than a little English or Flemish (the regional language of northern Belgium). Dick and Sheila had the sense that if someone could speak to them in their heart language, the response would be overwhelming.

Soon this was confirmed with a visit by Bishop David Roller and his wife, Yvonne; Bishop Roller used to serve as Area Director for Latin America for FM World Missions before being elected bishop. Seeing the

response of these Spanish-speakers to the Rollers, it struck a chord with the Dickinsons. They asked Bishop Roller: How soon could the church get Spanish-speaking missionaries to Belgium? Two years, they were told, this being the average amount of time needed to find, equip, fund and send new missionaries.

How long is two years? When one wants to experience a Gospel-sharing relationship one can truly understand at a heart level, two years is too long. Dick and Sheila looked high and low for someone who could minister to the Spanish-speakers they encountered. They asked us to come for a short visit to meet and minister, but the timing didn't work out for us to go to Belgium until just this past week. By then, however, it was clear to us that this was not just for the short term.

Europe's New Spiritual Geography: Belgium = Macedonia

In Acts 16, Paul and his companions visited various cities in what is now southern Turkey, preaching the Gospel. Yet when they reached the regions of Galatia and Phrygia, they were obliged to pass through, being "kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word" in this area. They went another way, and "During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" They left at once, "concluding that God had called [them] to preach the gospel" to the Macedonians.

We have sensed a similar dynamic at work for us these last few months. Although we love the people of Spain and have desired and endeavored to share the Gospel of Christ with them, we have sensed that God is leading us in a new direction. We recognized that it was time to prayerfully seek what God had in mind for us if not Spain. We sought God's leading and opened ourselves to new possibilities.

At the same time, however, in one of those "coincidences" that God often orchestrates, our leadership was prayerfully considering the needs in Belgium and who might be able to serve them. When the possibility that we could help with the work there arose, we decided to embrace this opportunity, to see if this could be God's leading for us for this time. And after our recent trip to Belgium, we couldn't be more sure!

Helping, Equipping and Being Equipped

While we are quite certain that we are being led to minister in Belgium among Spanish-speakers, that will not be the full range of our work there. We will also help with the Oostende congregation, a very international group including Belgians, Filipinos, Africans and others. We will also be learning much from the wealth of experience God has given to Dick and Sheila in ministry. Dick has served many years as a pastor in a variety of settings and will be a great mentor for Michael as he begins in earnest his own pastoral work. Sheila's experience and expertise in children's ministry will make her a great guide to Carrie, whose passion for reaching children with the Gospel of Jesus is no secret.

What is more, our background in French (Michael studied for 4 years, and Carrie holds a degree in French) will help us to equip others for ministry in the French-speaking part of Belgium and perhaps France also. We are eager to see in what other ways God can use the team being assembled in Belgium (including Belgian and African leaders) to impact the kingdom in this important yet obscure nation, the seat of the European Union. We hope there will be lasting ripples from the work that will come about now and in the coming years.

A Fruitful Visit

Last week, God enabled us to visit with three congregations in Belgium, including a meeting of the Spanish-speaking group, as well as to learn quite a bit about the city of Oostende, where we'll be living. We even found an ideal place to live as a young family.



Carrie, Michael and "Frijolin" with Maryeve, Damian and Fleurestan in Oostende, Belgium

However, the house will not be ready until early February. Not to worry: God even provided a temporary apartment with storage space for the coming months. It belongs to the parents of Maryeve, a Belgian friend of Carrie's, who by divine "coincidence" happened to have a vacation home in the next town over. During our visit, she "just happened" to be in town and was able to help us look for our new home

and visit the hospital where Carrie will give birth. God is so good!

Praises

- For God's grace and clear direction in leading us to Belgium and the opportunity to serve Him there.
- For a blessed trip to visit Belgium, finding a new home for our soon-to-be-growing family, and meeting the people with whom we'll be working.
- For God's grace in the visa process. The Belgian embassy in Madrid has been helpful in the application process and will even expedite the visas for us to arrive legally in Belgium before our son's birth.
- God gave Miya, our "exchange student," a wonderful time with the Spanish family she stayed with. She now has her own "Spanish family."

Prayers

- For fellow FM missionary and friend, Al Mellinger, his wife, Diane, and their family, on the recent passing of Al's sister.
- That our visas would be processed quickly, ideally in time for our move to Belgium, scheduled for early December.
- For the process of saying goodbye to Spain, including packing up and transition.
- That "Little Bean" would continue to grow and develop and that we would continue to get ready for his arrival.
- For a safe and expedited move early next month.

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"Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth. Say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns.'"

—Psalm 96:7-10a