



By *Tom Edwards*
COUNTRY COORDINATOR
for SLOVAKIA

Tom is Renewal Ministries' country coordinator for Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Tanzania. Tom began full-time ministry in 1974; it soon evolved into an international outreach of lay Catholic evangelization and mission with an emphasis on preaching and teaching Scripture. Tom and his wife, Jean Marie, make their home in St. Augustine, Florida.



(Pictured L-R)
Mission team members included Bohdan Novak, from Slovakia; Country Coordinator Tom Edwards; Tibi Majoros, Renewal Ministries' Country Coordinator for Romania; Jean Marie Edwards; Fr. Imre Kruzslac; and Ron and Marilyn Bergeron from Ontario, Canada. Willie Kuttschrutter, also from Ontario, is not pictured. We are grateful to Tibi for organizing the itinerary and translating in Romania.

Spreading the **GOSPEL** in Eastern Europe

Renewal Ministries has conducted annual mission outreaches to Eastern Europe for twenty-five years. This most recent mission to Slovakia and Romania (which occurred before the coronavirus pandemic) took our ministry to areas not previously visited, while also cooperating with long-time friends. We gained access to many public schools, where we shared—among other things—the pro-life message, the basic kerygma, and prayer with religion and ethics classes. Our pro-life teaching included development of the baby in the womb, the redemptive approach to healing for those who have had abortions or those who have been closely affected by it, and the virtue of chastity.

POP RAD · SLOVAKIA ↻

On the day of our arrival, we met with public high school religion and ethics classes for two hours of pro-life presentations with one large group of students. Jean Marie spoke on development of the baby in the womb and abortion. Marilyn Bergeron spoke on chastity. The students were extremely receptive and moved by the teaching. Many of them came to our evening sessions at the University Center.

That evening, we shared a message on personal conversion and repentance. The following day, we returned to the University Center. Willie Kuttschrutter shared her testimony, and I spoke on “Discipleship—Reality Check” and “Common Unity—Community.”

PRESOV · SLOVAKIA ↻

We have been cooperating with the Maranatha Community in Presov for many years. The community continues to grow in numbers and outreach. The group now numbers four-hundred adults and 150 children. Those who were young teens when we first began FIRE rallies and discipleship schools now are parents with several kids.

The group conducts events on most weekdays throughout the year. They are very organized with activities for families, couples, singles, young adults, and children. Music ministries abound at every level. The facility the group

has used for many events is now far too small for the number of people attending. Construction has begun on the lot next door for a new multi-purpose building that will seat one-thousand people. Community members remain active in their respective parishes and spearhead many outreach programs. Evangelization efforts have produced a growing branch community in the medieval town of Bardejov, about sixty kilometers away.

Our team participated in a Day of Renewal followed by prayer ministry with individuals. Approximately three-hundred people attended.

SVIDNEK · SLOVAKIA ↻

Our day in Svidnek involved several venues over a twelve-hour period. Two of us presented a retreat day for nineteen Greek Catholic priests. The Greek Catholic Church in Slovakia is in full union with the Catholic Church. Its liturgical rite is the Byzantine Rite. Most of the priests are married with families. The theme for the day was “Revival and Renewal.” The participants were very receptive.

Meanwhile, Jean Marie, Marilyn, and Willie shared the Word of God and the pro-life message with 150 high school students. Jean Marie shared on the marvels of God’s creation in the developmental stages of the baby. She also shared the shocking methods of abortion being used around the world



ABOVE LEFT | The little fetal models are working miracles wherever they are presented and explained!

ABOVE RIGHT | Jean Marie Edwards shares the pro-life message with high school students.

and how the horror has now progressed in the US to include actually killing a fully born baby. Marilyn shared on Post-Abortion Syndrome. Willie spoke on adoption and the care for special needs babies. A Greek priest attended the event who was in mourning for a child that he and his wife had lost, and our team had the privilege of praying with him.

Willie has many amazing testimonies from her eighty-two years of life experience. As a little girl born and raised in the Netherlands, she has vivid memories of Nazi soldiers dragging away her neighbors and friends. Her family later immigrated to Canada. She and her husband adopted and raised five children—some from various ethnicities, and some with severe disabilities. After retiring from her teaching career and being widowed, she answered God’s call to mission. She served in Hungary for a year, then went to Kazakhstan for seven-and-a-half years. After a bout with cancer, she continues as an intrepid warrior. She has joined our Eastern Europe teams several times and last year joined our Tanzania team. When she speaks, people listen with awe.

In the evening, the men on our team attended the Greek Catholic Mass, followed by a meeting at which we were able to share a talk with a group of men from surrounding towns. Meanwhile, the women on our team attended the Roman Catholic Mass and then a women’s group meeting, where they shared testimonies and prayed with many, followed by a time of fellowship.

RIMAVSKA SOBOTA · SLOVAKIA ↻

Our task in Rimavska Sobota was to speak to two forty-five-minute classes in the public high school. We were asked to speak on “Mission” and to share the pro-life message. Jean Marie taught on babies and abortion. Ron shared a short testimony, and we presented some video clips of missions in Africa and Asia. Since the priest teaches the religion and ethics classes each week, we had freedom to share the Gospel with the students.

ROMANIA ↻

Tibi Majoros joined us in Romania, where some of the outreach venues required us to travel up to six hours per day.

On Mission Sunday Weekend, we made a two-hour drive to the town of Tasha’s, and Fr. Imre Kruzslac invited us to speak during and after Mass on mission and evangelization. I spoke on the many exhortations we have received through the Church documents that mandate us to be a missionary Church. Jean Marie spoke about pro-life work as mission. After the presentations, many came forward for personal prayer ministry.

Our final venue took us to a small-but-faithful prayer community that was extremely appreciative we came to share with them. Marilyn shared testimony, Ron Bergeron sang, and I spoke on “Discipleship—Reality Check.” All participants were eager for prayer ministry. A fellowship time followed as we lingered late into the evening.

PRO-LIFE MINISTRY ↻

The pro-life ministry and education that we offer has become somewhat of a phenomenon. Not only is it a topic of life and death, but we seem to be encountering a great hunger for straightforward talk on the subject. The dark forces that promote the evils of abortion have been invading these Eastern European countries just as they have in the West. Thankfully, when young people hear the scriptural and scientific facts, they are quick to recognize and embrace the truth.

GOING FORWARD ↻

The Eastern European countries remain fertile ground for the New Evangelization. Opportunities abound. On this trip, we received invitations that we were forced to decline, because we didn’t have enough time. I’m convinced future efforts will be the same.

Often, youth do not hear the truth spoken anywhere. We find that even those who are responsible for the religion classes often do not speak the full truth. Many adults seem surprised that the young people want facts. We constantly witness young men and women in their teens come to tears when they see and hear the truth. They ask the teachers to extend the class time so they can hear more.

TEENS COME TO TEARS WHEN THEY SEE AND HEAR THE TRUTH.

The little fetal models are working miracles wherever they are presented and explained. This ministry opens more doors for the proclamation of the fullness of the Gospel!