

SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN SLOVAKIA



BY TOM EDWARDS

Country Coordinator for Slovakia

Tom Edwards 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.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, we were thrilled to be able to travel to Slovakia in October of 2021 for our annual mission outreach. Outreaches to Eastern European countries have been going for twenty-seven years now! Our mission team included Patricia Welther from Louisiana, USA, Bohdan Novak from Slovakia, me, and my wife, Jean Marie. We flew into Budapest, and our schedule was intense as we ministered in six different towns in just under two weeks. So many were eager to host our ministry that we could not accept all the invitations.

BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA

Upon arrival in Budapest, we were met by Bohdan and drove three and one-half hours to the capital city of Bratislava, where we had been invited to the Naim Community. We spent three days with this Community, the core of which is comprised of families who have been gathering together since 2003. We spent two days conducting events for the Community, and then, in their first attempt at a parish event since the onset of Covid, we were all surprised by a turnout of about ninety people! Jean Marie and Patricia shared moving testimonies of overcoming trials, and Tom presented teachings on *Faith that Overcomes Obstacles*, *Proclaiming Jesus as Lord*, and *Be Not Afraid*. As it was with all of the places we visited, there was pent-up hunger and thirst for teaching and personal ministry.

ORAVA, SLOVAKIA

From Bratislava, we made a five-hour drive to the town of Orava in north-eastern Slovakia, one of the regions hit particularly hard by Covid. Churches in the region, including the one we visited, had been completely closed for months, and all residents were still required to wear N95-type masks. Despite this, the parish priest stepped out in faith and gave an open invitation for people to come to an evening of renewal and personal prayer. We were amazed when nearly 300 people arrived! Prayer ministry continued into the late hours of the evening.

Following an evening of spiritual renewal in Orava, participants were eager to receive prayer for healing and a greater anointing of the Holy Spirit.



PRESOV, SLOVAKIA

Our next stop was in the town of Presov, where we have continued to cooperate with our long-time friends who belong to the Maranatha Community. The Community has grown exponentially with many young married couples and their children. Like most other places, the Covid-19 pandemic has taken its toll on in-person gatherings, but the Community continues to be innovative with virtual ministry and outreach. They are currently struggling to complete a new building which will seat 1000 people and provide several rooms for small groups. The outer structure has been constructed, but much electrical and finishing work remains.



For many years, Renewal Ministries has been involved in an event held in Presov called the Fire Rally or in the Slovak language, "Ohen." In past years, a local sports arena filled with nearly 7,000 people from around the country for the all-day event. In 2020 and again this year, the rally was broadcast virtually. The theme for 2021 was "Jesus is Everything I need," and our team was invited to be the event speakers!

We spent two days in the production studio recording videos, and the event was then streamed on YouTube and Facebook on October 30.

As of this writing, over 15,000 people have viewed some part of the event; praise be to God who does wondrous things! Our other venues in Presov included special meetings for small group leaders and worship leaders.

After leaving Presov, we continued on to conduct events in Poprad, Bardejov, and Vranov.

SHARINGS FROM TEAM MEMBERS



PAT WELTHER

"The people of Slovakia are such a blessing for the Church. Many of the people I met while in Slovakia shared what life was like under Communism and told stories of how their faith flourished under persecution. When we gathered to deliver our message and pray with them in various churches, there was a real hunger for Jesus, for healing, and for a greater anointing of the Holy Spirit.

"We also met so many young people who wanted more of the Lord in their life. As we prayed with one young man who felt lonely, depressed, and unsure if he still believed in God, he was overwhelmed with the presence of Jesus and recommitted his life to the Lord. We are standing on the promise that the Lord will lead and guide this man to discover who the Lord is and the purpose for which the Lord has created him."

BOHDAN NOVAK

"God's presence was visible and tangible during our time in Slovakia. The Gospel that was preached and the testimonies that were shared found their way to the hearts of many people. People were able to come forth and ask for prayer to overcome burdens like fear, anxiety, uncertainty, and loneliness, and God came with his presence into their hearts. People really appreciated our encouraging messages and prayers amid the Covid crisis. Positive feedbacks came very soon after we visited each town. God indeed came with his refreshment and light."

JEAN MARIE

"All missions have a uniqueness. The uniqueness of this mission for me was experienced in the one-on-one prayer time. No matter where we were, it was clear the people were listening with their hearts and receiving the message. If Tom spoke on obstacles, they identified them in their lives and asked for the grace and courage to go through them with our Lord. Whatever the Holy Spirit was saying to them through each speaker, they heard and took it to prayer. This happened over and over in each place and through every teaching and testimony. Our Lord moved very concretely, seamlessly, and lovingly from the word to the heart. It was a profound gift (and lesson) for all of us to experience God's perfect love for each person who came so humbly for prayer."