

Profiles of Western Europe Partners

International Commission - W. European Leadership Workshop

May 27-30 Jerry and I led the annual workshop for our country leaders in Rome, Italy. We had fourteen countries represented with several new leaders/countries participating. We were housed in the Giovanni XXII Monastery (bell tower to the right) outside of Rome (the end of the train line at Frascati Station.)

Many of you get Jerry's "Mission Reports" as we travel, and this trip was shorter than usual—only one week in total. (It took us part of three days to get to Rome due to the tornadoes at DFW.) So, in an effort to share more about our work in Western Europe, I would like to give you a few profiles of our participants and how we connect with them and they to each other.

Evangelism in Europe is relational, and because the project guests come for a short time, we rely on the relationships that the hosting church members have with their friends and family. We partner, through churches, to communicate the story of Jesus and His work in our lives and in the world. The purpose of our annual leadership workshop is to discuss and plan for partnerships between our countries and churches.

Jerry and I started developing a Western European strategy for International Commission in 1996. Historically, American churches have been invited to European churches for an eight-day project, planned by each host church. The unintended consequence of that had been that Western European churches seldom sent teams. Americans were willing to go, and Europeans were content to let them come.

About six years ago, an idea for shorter partnerships among Western European churches, both hosting and sending, was suggested by our leaders at a Leadership Workshop. Several such "Impact Missions" have occurred (IC calls this type of "no-Americans" project "National-to-National" [N2N]), and are now gaining momentum.



This week in Finland, Jani and Kesia Edstrom (picture left) are conducting a camp for the pre-teens of churches in Finland, and a team from a church in Malta is there to help the Finns conduct their summer camp. The Edströms have been a part of our leadership workshop for only two years, but they immediately saw the advantages of Impact Missions. The cross-cultural influence and additional manpower will enable the young people to see beyond their small, minority church situation to the wider, world-wide Church of Jesus Christ.

Jani serves as the pastor of the Betelkyrkan Baptist Church in Helsinki. He and Kesia lead the Interfaith office of the Finnish Baptist Union. He was one of the leaders of our worship times, utilizing his giftedness on the trumpet.

Edwin and Sylvia Caruana (picture right), our leaders from Malta, have served with International Commission for over ten years. They sent a team to France in 2001 and hosted Americans in 2003. Edwin is the pastor of the Baptist Church of Mosta, Malta. He and Sylvia host the *Blue Med Conference* every January for those ministering in North Africa and the Middle East. They have four grown children, and have visited in McKinney many times over the years we have known them. Perhaps, some of you have met them.



The thing I remember about the Caruanas is what Edwin told me the first time they agreed to come to our Western European Workshop. “Mission groups are always asking to come to Malta to work,” he said, “but IC is the only group that has ever asked us to go and serve.”

International Commission—Western Europe is about enabling true partners, peers in Christ, across cultures, to evangelize their countries and grow spiritually as they work together. Look for more leader profiles and reports from Western Europe as we together share God’s story and our own.



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