

Annual Report to Mission Partners

2023

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SUMMARY

From start to finish, 2023 seemed like a marathon, sprinkled with several sprints. Rarely being able to catch a breath, but with stretches where the pace seemed a bit more manageable ... a little less demanding. Now you are asking the question we have been asking ourselves throughout the year ... can we maintain the pace? With this being the second post-Covid year of



our (nearly 5 years so far) deployment, it is apparent to us that we must do a better job of planning our pit stops and regulating our pace to suit our capabilities. How?

Well, it will mean being disappointed sometimes. Disappointed we can't say "yes" to this ... can't invest deeper in that. At least and until the Lord helps us remove some responsibilities from our plate. But what about the prayers and prophetic words about Him expanding our tent ... moving the tent pegs out? We believe that this doesn't mean more work, but rather Him using the offering of time and work we have in a greater way.

Many times, and to many people in 2023, we described our life as a Thanksgiving plate. There is way too much on the plate, and even the portion sizes of some the items on the plate are too big. But we love what we've put on the plate, so we consume what we've taken, and in the end, we often feel uncomfortable and exhausted. For short seasons we feel that these additional life and ministry opportunities are great – even doable in an effective and healthy way. But as a sustained way of life, they are not.

So where do we look in order to make changes? First and foremost, to the Lord. For His wisdom, for His input, His leading. We've always felt that our time as pastors of City Church International is not indefinite. And in fact, we have already started to put some feelers out to find successors. We also don't feel released to simply "give a date" and drop it in the laps of the City Church leadership team. So, we are trusting the Lord to bring wisdom and clarity in what that looks like. No, we don't plan to go anywhere. But we need to hand over what can be the all-consuming day-to-day responsibility to new lead pastors. And in essence, we would be stepping back, not stepping out.

We also need wisdom on the future of our ministry work in Ukraine. It has been fueled, financially, by the loving gifts of you ... our team and supporters. But giving for Ukraine is shrinking, so we will be seeking the Lord's input on how that should be reflected in our work there. We sense He still wants us involved there long-term, so maybe He will make a way for us to continue on a different financial footing. We trust He will show us.

The one area of our ministry work where we want to increase the portion size is worker care. As most of you know, it is the first and original portion of our call to the field. The Lord has produced much fruit in that area here in Europe, but there is so much more that we feel can and should be done. So again, we will be listening and responding to the Lord's leading as to if our desired changes can begin take shape in 2024.

Frankly, it is difficult. Despite knowing we need to prepare to let go, the Lord continues to move in more powerful ways than ever within City Church International community of faith. Significant progress was made in the second half of this year in our "nudgings" to both find our own space and to start a new children's ministry. We are on the verge of signing a contract to lease a space very near to where we currently meet, and it will provide over double the amount of space! And twelve individuals stepped up to help us build a new children's ministry (CCI Kids), with the kickoff Sunday on January 14, 2024!

We have begun planning a year out where possible. And we know we will be in the United States as least once, and possibly twice in 2024. With the implementation of the new 10% FMI worker fee in January of 2025, we will make the trip(s) and investment in connecting with existing supporters, asking them to consider increasing their gifts this year. We'd also like to seek out new supporters with the same goal in mind ... to cover the 10% that will be deducted from our support dollars, fueling growth of FMI worldwide.

We are also very excited to "welcome the world" to Bratislava as we host the 2024 FMI Europe / MENACA worker training in October. It is both an honor and a privilege, but also a lot of work to be the host city. We have a ton of support, however, from both the regions' leadership teams, and from the City Church Bratislava leadership group. It will be so fun to not only welcome our Europe and MENACA peers, but those who will join us from FMI in the United States. Frankly, we cannot think of a better place to gather!

Despite being squeezed by the pressures and responsibilities of life and ministry – more often than we care to say – we frequently pinch ourselves, in awe of the privilege of joining Jesus as He continues to invite us into working alongside Him here in Europe. You ... our supporters and champions, and our FMI Europe family, are all gifts that sustain us and give us fuel for every "next stretch" of our journey. Thank you for your faithful and continuing support of every piece. We hope and pray you understand and feel your part as we join in every piece. We are continually and profoundly grateful that you continue to stand with us and for us. Thank you!

2023 CALENDER & KEY EVENTS

January 1	City Church International continues a regular rhythm of Prayer & Fasting the first full week of every month
Jan 11 – Mar 8	Led FMI Europe & MENACA Emotionally Healthy Spiritually online cohort
January 13	Welcomed our son, Ben, to Bratislava for a week
January 16	First meeting of CCI Servant Council overseeing all CCI Ministries
January 20	City Church International Servant Appreciation Event at Petržalka Bowling Center
January 21	4-day trip to Krakow, Poland, to serve FMI Europe global worker family, the Mielonens
January 30	First 2023 trip to Ukraine – Joy and Gary take a small team to connect and work with pastors and partners in Lviv, Tarashcha, and for the first time with pastors Volodymyr and Andrej, in Tal’ne.
February 9 - 24	Joy begins 2-week trip to United States to support our kids and grandkids doing pre-deployment training with YWAM.
February 24	One-year anniversary of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine
Feb 28 - Mar 4	FMI Ministry Team meetings in Koln, Germany
March 13 - 15	Compassion Care in Crisis training in Edinburgh, Scotland
March 16 - 17	Visit to FMI Europe global worker family, the Swishers, in Seamill, Scotland
March 30	First quarterly City Church International Prayer & Worship Night
March 30 - April 1	Host Young Life Prague Leaders Martin & Lauren Polok, and their three children, at our home in Bratislava
April 9	City Church International celebrates Easter in Slovakia
April 11 - 17	Second 2023 trip to Ukraine for Gary, taking a team to connect and work with pastors and partners in Lviv, Tarashcha, Tal’ne, and Uman (first team trip to front lines in Kramatorsk, Slovynsk, and Lyman)
April 16	Gary preaches at Spring of Life Church in Lviv, Ukraine
April 18-20	Berlin to assist our kids’ move out and transition to middle east
April 24 - 26	Host Johanna Oddo and Grace Kladnik from Foursquare Western District at our home in Bratislava

2023 CALENDER & KEY EVENTS (continued)

April 27- May 1	Fellowship of European Foursquare Churches Gathering in Guadalajara, Spain
May 1 - 6	Vacation and rest prior to furlough
May 16	Depart Bratislava for 6-week furlough in the United States
May 16 - Jun 6	Support raising and support team meetings in California
May 20	Podpora Europa open house at The Bridge Church, Rancho Santa Margarita, California
May 21	CV Church, Glendale, California
May 26	The Bridge Church Global Missions Event
May 28 - 31	Foursquare Connection, Anaheim, California
June 4	The Bridge Church, Rancho Santa Margarita, California
June 6	Travel from Southern California to the Pacific Northwest
Jun 6 - June 26	Support raising and support team meetings in Washington and Oregon
June 10	Podpora Europa Open House at Eastpointe Church, Bonney Lake, Washington
June 11	Eastpointe Church, Bonney Lake, Washington
June 14	Prayer meeting with Abundant Life Foursquare Church, Orting, Washington
June 18	Grays Harbor Foursquare Church, Aberdeen, Washington
June 28	Return to Bratislava from 6-week furlough
June 29	City Church International 2 nd quarter Prayer & Worship gathering
June 30	Return of Tajovskeho House (Ukrainian refugee home) to landlord after 16 months of providing housing for 30+ refugees, and after working to ensure all remaining refugee residents have their own work and housing solutions
July 4-5	Third 2023 trip to Ukraine for Gary, connecting and working with pastors and partners in Lviv
July 13-19	Receive and host our kids/grandkids and assist them with their transition and move to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
July 30 - Aug 6	Young Life Czech Republic 2023 Summer Camp in Beskydský, Czech Republic

2023 CALENDER & KEY EVENTS (continued)

August 7	We expand our FMI Europe Care Cluster network, adding one new Care Cluster, bringing the total to 9
August 8 - 12	Gary in Krakov, Poland, to assist FMI Europe global worker Travis Mielonen
August 16 - 18	Riga, Latvia, to attend funeral of City Church International husband and father, support his wife and sons
August 21 - 26	Bielefeld, Germany, to support FMI Europe global workers Anna Marie Mazzone, and Toby and Ginny Huysen and kids
August 27	City Church International baptisms at Hrubá Borša
September 10	First meeting of City Church International children's ministry (CCI Kids) team
September 19 - 23	Celebrate 37 th wedding anniversary in Budapest
October 10 – 17	Fourth 2023 trip for Ukraine, connecting and working with pastors and partners in Lviv, Zhytomer, Tal'ne (with a trip east to Toretsk near the front lines), and Kyiv
October 13 – 15	Joy hosts PAOC global worker family girls Mia, Livia, and Stella Armitage
October 15	Gary preaches at City of Light Church in Kyiv, Ukraine
October 23 – 29	Travel to (road trip) and attend FMI Europe Fall training in Sophia, Bulgaria
Oct 30 – Nov 4	Travel to (road trip) and serve FMI Europe global worker families in Korce, Albania ... Tirana, Albania ... and Zenica, Bosnia
November 8 - 12	FMI Europe Ministry Team meeting in Cluj-Napoca, Romania
November 20 - 25	Celebrate Thanksgiving with our kids and grandkids in Nicosia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus
November 30	City Church International 4 th quarter Prayer & Worship gathering
December 3 – 15	Welcome and host our kids and grandkids from Tacoma, Washington
December 24	City Church International Christmas Eve Day Service
December 25	Host Christmas at our home for five CRU global workers and family of four from Latvia

DETAILED MINISTRY UPDATE (Looking Back)

JANUARY

2023 was the first year since 2020 that the new year came without any Covid restrictions – a welcome change indeed!

It was no coincidence, then, that we returned to the place where we were in March of 2020 when we were originally made aware of Slovakia's imminent Covid restrictions ... Krakow, Poland. Our trip that spring was cut short, and although we had seen them in different locations (including in our home in Bratislava), we were determined to return to Krakow and spend time with FMI global workers Travis and Alexis Mielonen and their kids Emma, Elaina, and Elijah.



Hanging with their family, enjoying some two-on-two adult time, and checking in on how everyone was doing – were all on the agenda. They, like us, had been going 100 MPH with the addition to Ukrainian refugee work to their already full plate. And while they were the first to say it was too much, they were also working to address and adjust their workload and the challenges associated with it. These are not just five precious global workers, they're dear friends and neighbors (Poland / Slovakia), and we consider it a privilege to know and work with them!

We also saw them as our team made a brief stop on our way to Ukraine later in the month. Travis helped us secure an Ecoflow power supply unit which one of our partner pastors in Ukraine was able to use to keep the control circuit of a gas heater running, even when the power was out for hours at a time. Your support helped us make that happen! It was Joy's first journey to Ukraine – one that she found both deeply rewarding and very exhausting. A long trip with God connections at every stop!

We continued our work and partnerships with our friends and pastors in Lviv – Kostya and Olga Gadzha, opened a new partnership with friends and pastors in Tal'ne – Volodymyr & Oxana, and Andrej, and reunited with Foursquare Ukraine's national leader, Dmytro Mason. Pastor Dmytro's church in Kyiv – City of Light – has been a compassionate help and encouragement to Ukrainians in Kyiv since the war started!





We also held our first annual City Church International Servant Appreciation event. A very fun evening of food and bowling for all those who serve the CCI family. In reality, it's almost the whole church who is invited to this type of event. Over 80% of those who call CCI their spiritual "home", serve the CCI family in some way. We are so grateful for these dear servants and their heart to be part of what the Lord is doing in and through CCI ... a beautiful community of faith!

FEBRUARY

We spent a couple of weeks in February apart from each other. Joy traveled to the United States to support our kids and grandkids who were training and preparing for their transition from life in Germany to life in the middle east. With four littles, it was really good for Nana to be there to give help and relief to both mom and dad.

Joy also managed to sneak in a few days with our friends (and FMI worker supervisors) Kiha and Heidi Pimental. Joy and Heidi found needed time to connect and encourage each other in the work that each of them is focused on in different parts of the world.

As the one-year anniversary of the war in Ukraine arrived, it was hard to imagine that a war next door was still going on. So much needless suffering and pain. But we are immensely grateful of the many friendships and partnerships that God had given us which allowed us to be (and continue to be) the Lord's love and compassion in the midst of it. Small batches of human love and aid, poured out in the name of a loving God!



We have the honor and privilege of serving on the FMI Europe Ministry Team – a group of global workers who support our FMI Global Associate Directors Jeff & Debbie Roper by being focused on helping other FMI Europe workers be effective and healthy in their life and in their ministry work. We meet online monthly and try to meet once or twice a year in person. Such was the case in February when we gathered in Koln, Germany. It was both a blessing and an important time of connection and planning for all of us.

MARCH

We made a dual-purpose trip to Scotland in March. First, we attended a 3-day training seminar – Compassionate Care in Crisis. It was largely focused on the fundamentals of psychological first aid (PFA), used in helping the victims of crisis or traumatic events. Often there are immense mental and emotional difficulties for these people. As global workers who are put in situations where we are given the privilege of assisting them, it's very important to know how to help them process what they're thinking and feeling. We are grateful to FMI Europe for investing in us by paying for us to be part of this training.



Second, we went out to visit and spend time with newly deployed FMI global workers Nate and De'sha and their son, Noah. The Swishers had been in-country for only about 5 months when we visited them, but they were doing well as they prayed and sought the Lord about where they would make their long-term home in Scotland. It was very fun to hang out, share some food, and welcome them all into the FMI Europe family!

March also brought our first of four (planned for this year) CCI Worship & Prayer nights. We have been feeling “nudged” by the Lord to lead our community of faith into more intimate sessions of worship and prayer. We kept hearing the Lord say “let your worship lead you into prayer ... and your prayer lead you into worship”. Gary led the worship portion on guitar and vocals, focusing on unrehearsed familiar choruses and expressions from the spoken prayers. Joy led the prayer portion by modeling and encouraging corporate prayers. We were blown away by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the hunger of the CCI family that came – about 15 – to worship, pray, and simply be in the presence of the Lord. We would love to have this intimate expression of worship during our Sunday services, but we feel really good about these worship and prayer nights being a good “learning environment” to be open for that on Sundays.

At the end of April, we welcomed our friends Martin & Lauren Polok and their three beautiful children, Olivia, and Tom and Felix who are twins. They are the Young Life Area Directors in Prague, Czech Republic who we met when we helped them with an English Camp in 2020. Raising three children, especially twins, can be a very demanding job – especially while trying to do full time ministry at the same time! They really hadn't gotten out of Prague



(except to visit family) since the twins were born in 2022. So, they took us up on the offer to come and be with us for a weekend in Bratislava. Four adults looking after three kids is easier than two, but all four of us still had our hands full! But what a joy to spend time with them, eating, walking, talking about life and ministry, and showing them some of Bratislava. We are looking forward to the next time this sweet family visits us again!

APRIL

We celebrated Easter at CCI in a very unique way. The past couple of years we have had an intimate (online, because of Covid) devotion on Good Friday, and then a celebration service on Easter Sunday. This year we combined both into one Easter Sunday service, beginning the service reflecting on the cross and Jesus crucifixion, and then transitioning (during worship) to the celebration of His resurrection. It was a very powerful way to remember what Jesus went through for each of us, before rising victoriously for each of us as well!





We made our second trip to Ukraine in 2023 in April. We were pleased to welcome FMI global worker Matt Edwards from Linz, Austria to join us! The trip would prove to be unique and powerful in a number of ways, the least of which was that the Lord opened up the door (for the first time) for us to travel to the front lines of the war and minister with our

friends and partners Volodymyr (Vova) and Andrej. We weren't expecting this part of the trip when we departed Bratislava, but we embraced it fully after praying and getting a peace from the Lord about including it in our itinerary.

The portion of the day we spend near the front line in Lyman brought the reality of this war to the core of our minds, emotions, and spirits. Being able to be a small expression of the Lord's love and compassion (and hope, we pray) was a privilege beyond explanation. We continue to be overwhelmed by the need, but more so by the faithful souls like Vova and Andrej who are making weekly trips to be this love and compassion to others in need.



It was so good, also, to connect with our friends and pastors in Lviv – Kostya and Olga, and to be with the Spring of Life Church on the day that Ukraine celebrated Easter as well! What a privilege to celebrate Easter twice ... and to be with fellow believers in two different countries! Gary was asked and given the privilege of sharing a message at both of their Easter services. We are blessed and honored to call

Pastor Volodymyr and the community of faith at Spring of Life Church in Lviv friends!

Immediately after Gary's return from Ukraine, we hopped in the City Church van and drove to Berlin to help our kids move their stuff out of a storage unit there. We brought it back to Bratislava until we could figure out how to get it to them in Cyprus.

Fortunately, we had room in our small garage, but will we ever be able to get it back to them (haha). Only time will tell!

A few days after our return from Berlin, we welcomed Johanna Oddo and Grace Kladnik from the Foursquare Western District to our home in Bratislava. As the Western District is partnered with FMI Europe and MENACA, they had come to attend the Fellowship of European Foursquare Churches conference in Guadalajara, Spain. But on the front end, we got to welcome them and help them wear off their jet lag for a few days by showing off our city while drinking plenty of caffeine (Bratislava has an amazing coffee culture!).



We then traveled together to Spain to join with pastors and leaders from all across Europe, celebrating 100 years of the Foursquare family. As part of our time in Spain, we connected and spent time FMI global workers attending from across the continent. And the Western District hosted a special dinner, just for FMI Europe workers attending!

MAY

There was so much packed into the first four months of the year that we decided to take a week of “down time” early in the month before the start of our six-week furlough. Planned down time is a rarity for us, but something we are trying to incorporate into our normal rhythm. It’s easy to let the needs of others overtake the needs of self. Both are important, but scheduling to meet our own needs seems to be the only way it happens.

We departed Bratislava on May 16th for six weeks of furlough in the United States. Furlough in global worker terms means connections with our support team (individuals, families, and churches) and raising additional support through meetings with new potential supporters. This part of our work is both incredibly rewarding and very exhausting. We love spending time with the people who pray for, encourage, and support us financially, but doing it most every day for six weeks straight can be draining.



We used a different approach than we did when we had our last furlough in 2021. We held open houses in both the Pacific Northwest and Southern California, allowing us to connect with several people at the same event. Our first event was in May at The Bridge Church in Rancho Santa Margarita, California. We are grateful to The Bridge and to all those who stopped by to say “Hi”, hug us, encourage us, and pray for us. Thank you!

On May 21st we were invited to share at CV Church in Glendale, California. Pastors Scott and Kathe Wood and their church family welcomed us with open arms as we shared about the ongoing work of being God’s hands of love and compassion to the nation of Ukraine. What a vibrant and joyful community of faith CV Church is!



We are incredibly thankful for every moment we got to spend with dear friends in California. There is never enough time, it seems, to see everyone. But oh, how sweet the time was we were given with those we did see. And we are grateful to those who opened their homes to us so we would have a place to stay, and to those who allowed us to use one of their cars so we would have transportation during our stay in Cali! Our very special thanks to Chuck & Julie Adamo ... Gary & Joanna Russell ... and Dale & Felicia Birney!

We attended Connection 2023 in Anaheim and it was a joyful overload of people who we know from the Foursquare family that we got to see while we were there. We connected with FMI global workers (some who had already deployed and some who were making final preparations to do so), and had too many connections and conversations to remember with old friends and pastors who have very special places in our lives.



We were a “Global Mission Partner in Attendance” at this year’s The Bridge Church Global Missions Event. They had a “Taste of the Nations” evening, featuring foods from each of the area of the world where The Bridge has Global Mission Partners. The food was amazing, and Slovakia was well represented with Klobasa (sausage) and Pečne Buchty (baked, jam-filled rolls) lovingly prepared by Joy! Slovakia was a big hit!



And because both of our sons still live in Southern California, we spent time with each (and both) of them. Revisiting some of our old haunts, including one of our favorites – Shin Sen Gumi in Orange Country for some of the best Ramen on the planet!

JUNE

It was a privilege to join Pastors Ryan & Johanna Oddo at The Bridge Church in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, for their Sunday Service on June 4th. Joy and I shared a recent testimony from our time in Ukraine, and led communion for The Bridge family. It was a huge blessing to see so many of our friends from the community of faith we called “home” when we lived in Southern California. Friends are truly a gift, and lifelong friends are a treasure that by God’s grace stand the test of time!



We traveled from Southern California to the Pacific Northwest in early June for the remainder of our furlough. Our second open house event was in early June at Eastpointe Church in Bonney Lake, Washington. We are grateful to Eastpointe Church and to all those who stopped by to say “Hi”, hug us,

encourage us, and pray for us. Thank you for being our constant and faithful support!

And it was such a blessing to be with Pastors James & Tammy Ludlow, and Pastor Sue Christianson, and all our friends at Eastpointe Church in Bonney Lake, Washington, on Sunday, June 11th. – our church home for almost 10 years. Gary shared a message about the “Fine Print” that exists in our call to be Jesus’ witnesses. Fine print like world pandemics ... and war. And even though we don’t know all the fine print before we experience it, we can trust God to help us navigate through all of it. That is indeed our testimony of our nearly five years of working alongside Jesus in Europe!

We were invited to be part of a prayer meeting at Abundant Life Community Church in Orting, Washington, on June 14th. It was a gathering to pray for the nations, and Joy and I had the privilege of being part of a group to pray for the nation of Japan. We were immensely blessed when Pastor Brad and the rest of those gathered then prayed over our ministries of Care to global workers, pastors at CCI, and compassion to Ukraine. It was a power time of prayer and encouragement for both of us!

We stayed with Pastors (and dear friends) Kaj and Janell Martin and their kids Phoebe, Asha, and Luke, and joined them at Grays Harbor Foursquare Church on Sunday, June 18th. They are a life-giving community of faith in Aberdeen and champion what Jesus is doing in the nations. We are forever grateful to the Martins for years of faithful encouragement and support in what the Lord has invited us to be a part of with Him!

A good portion of our time in Washington state was of course being with family – our kids and grandkids. This fills our love tanks like nothing else. Just hanging and doing life ... taking walks ... enjoying good food ... having no agenda except being family. It is literally the thing we look forward to most and have the hardest time leaving behind. Fine print ... Jesus knows ... and we trust Him for giving us (and our kids and grandkids) the grace and strength to navigate the life He has asked us to live for Him!



The balance of our time in June was spent in the state of Oregon – spending part of the time connecting with dear friends, and part of the time resting with family. It was a perfect ending to our time in the USA. We needed the rest from the previous six weeks, and for all that was to transpire in the coming months. We returned to Seattle and departed on familiar flights to Amsterdam and Vienna for the long trip back to Slovakia.

The day after we arrived back in Bratislava, we held our second 2023 City Church International Worship and Prayer night. The CCI family came together again, hungering for and entering into the presence of the Lord in both worship and prayer. Our CCI worship team is also jumping in, learning this prophetic and fluid approach to worship while leaning into all that the Lord wants to share with us during these times. And while Gary has been leading the worship portions of these evenings, he is recruiting and mentoring other CCI worship team members to be a part of this special time of devotion through worship and through prayer.



JULY



Our third trip to Ukraine was planned for early July. This one had some hiccups, however, as the van we typically use to transport aid into and through Ukraine was having issues. We thought the issues were solved, but literally on the way out of town on July 4th (Independence Day!), the same problem reared its ugly head and we were forced to

adjust our plans. Not willing to be caught dead in the water, Gary quickly made the decision to take the aid we had acquired and move it from the large van to our car (think minivan). The plan was to at least complete the trip to Lviv where the aid we had was to be delivered, along with two of our other team members – Jaydon and Emma – who had planned meetings in Lviv throughout the week. We were blessed to share a meal with our friends and pastors Kostya and Olga, and their kids Danic and Mira, before going our separate ways. Nastia stayed and made her way to see family in Tarashcha. Gary returned to Bratislava the next day, while the three other team members made their way back to Slovakia a week later by bus. It was the Lord’s perfect timing, though, as upon his return, Gary fell ill and spent the next 7 days in bed with a severe cold.

Our kids and grandkids (Shane & Elizabeth Roley, and Amelia, Harvest, Josephine, and Rosemary) came to visit in mid-July – in the middle of their road trip from Germany to their new home in the Middle East. With a newly purchased (used) Land Rover Defender, however, there were several projects in getting it into



shape for the remainder of the trip. They had their first visit to CCI, but most importantly there was lots of “hanging with kids and grandkids” time while they were with us!



At the end of July we were off for 8 days to the Beskdyzky region of southeast Czech Republic for the Czech Republic Young Life 2023 Summer Camp. Our friend Martin Polok asked Gary to be the camp speaker this year. He created his 6-part message around the intersection of Faith (knowing what you believe), Purpose (knowing why you are here), and Relationship (knowing who is with you and who is for you). It was an amazing week of hanging with 100+ high school kids from all over the Czech Republic – challenging and tiring, but so rewarding!

AUGUST

This month we were very pleased to expand the FMI Europe Care Cluster we started in 2020. There are now nine (9) Care Clusters – groups of peer global workers with one couple committed to regularly connecting with and caring for the other 2-3 worker families or singles in their cluster. These care clusters connect 32 global worker families or singles across Europe, and a handful of FMI Europe emissaries based in the United States. Our cluster leaders vary in age and field experience from young to old ... semi-rookie to veteran. But all with a sincere heart to pastor and serve their FMI peers.

And speaking of caring for other global workers ... our FMI peers and friends in Poland, the Mielonens, began a much needed sabbatical in the United States this month. But with some loose ends that had to be tied up in Krakow, Travis traveled back to Poland and Gary spent four days helping him pack up and ready their house to be sublet. It was a great time of fellowship (and very hard work) for the two of them, but something we love to do – help fellow global workers where we can so they know that they are not alone. It is a privilege to serve those who serve others!





August brought tragedy to our City Church International community. The dear husband and father of a Latvian family in our community was killed in an automobile accident, leaving his wife and three teenage boys. The family was spending the summer in Latvia, and the husband was traveling from Belgium to meet them. We traveled

to Riga for the funeral, feeling very strongly that they should have support from their community of faith here in Bratislava. It was a beautiful funeral, but so very, very sad for this family. Gary understands what it is like to lose a father as a teenager, so he is particularly tuned in to how the boys are doing. And Joy is close friends with their mom, so we are doing all we can to help them navigate this incredibly difficult season.

We took a road trip to Bielefeld, Germany, to spend time with and support FMI global workers Toby and Ginny Huysen, and Anna Marie Mazzone. Toby and Ginny are worship leaders who recently moved from a city near Stuttgart and are taking the next year to transition to the lead pastor role of the Foursquare church in Bielefeld. Anna Marie continues to run the Street Church out of the same congregation, but has many partners from other churches in the city. Foursquare Germany has formally recognized this church and the work that they are doing among the homeless and the drug addicts of Bielefeld. What a joy and privilege it was to spend time and serve with them while we were there!



City Church International had a couple of wonderful Summer Event Sundays this year, where we spend time together in fun and fellowship after service. One was a grill party at a regional park near where we live, and one was a BBQ at the lake home of one of our faithful members in a small village outside of Bratislava. We enjoyed fun fellowship, an amazing food (including Slovak sausages), and we celebrated by baptizing a dear CCI member from Zimbabwe!

SEPTEMBER

We were thankful for things to slow down a bit in September. By slow down, we mean just the usual weekly rhythms of preaching, worship, and gatherings locally here in Bratislava LOL! But nonetheless, based at home in your own bed and surroundings.

Very exciting was the first meeting of our new City Church International children's ministry (CCI Kids) team. We have twelve who are committed to help, with 8 teachers each serving on a team one Sunday a month. We will start with one combined class (confident walkers to elementary school) and see how it goes from there. The plan is to split this class into two (preschool / elementary school) when the teachers have a better feel for their capacity and the class dynamics. We are grateful to Matthew Agosto of City Church Buena Park, and Amanda Holt from The Well Foursquare Church, for helping to train and prepare our team (online) to pour Jesus into the kids of CCI!



We did take five days and drove to Budapest to celebrate our 37th wedding anniversary. We had been there a few times in the last five years, but usually just for a day to pick someone up or drop someone off. We really hadn't spent any time there since our scouting trip (considering Budapest at that time as a possible place to live) in 2017. So, we enjoyed both visiting some of the sights we saw 6 years ago and discovered a whole batch of new ones. It was very fun just to wander, eat, and celebrate 37 years!

OCTOBER

This month brought our fourth trip this year to Ukraine. We always make sure we have at least two guys (including Gary) to travel east from Lviv, but we didn't have anyone who could join us from Bratislava to do that this time. So Nastia recruited a friend, Andrej, from the Carpatia region (south of Lviv), to meet us in Lviv and accompany us on the trip



to/from the east of Ukraine. The Lord opened up so many incredible doors on this trip. We brought and delivered aid to Lviv and our friends there as we always do. But we also connected with a group of young men and women in Zhytomer who are mission school graduates and living there to serve the many military families and youth who live in the area. Some, of course, who have already lost husbands and fathers.

We also had our second opportunity to accompany our friends and pastors in Tal'ne, Vova and Andrej, to near the front lines in eastern Ukraine. This time the destination was the city of Toretsk. Once having a population of over 100,000, less than 18,000 live there now. Vova and Andrej are well connected with God's faithful working in each of these cities. So, when we arrived, Vladimir, a member of a local church, was ready to welcome us and direct us to the areas of Toretsk where people would be gathered to hear a word of encouragement and receive food (including fresh-baked bread) to help sustain them in the midst of war. We had so much help along the way – women in a village near Tal'ne making homemade Ukrainian food (varenyky, pelmeni, borsch) for soldiers, and the pastor and his family from a local Tal'ne church baking over 200 fresh loaves of bread to for the people we would meet in Toretsk. What a privilege to deliver the love and compassion made possible by so many giving people ... including those who support our work!

On our way back to Lviv, we spent two nights in Kyiv and joined Pastor Dmytro Mason, his wife Natali, and the team at City of Light Church in Kyiv on Sunday. This is a life and spirit-filled Foursquare Church that has been a source of love and compassion to Kyiv since long before the war began. And they are not only providing a vibrant and healthy spiritual home to residents of Kyiv, but regularly traveling with teams to areas near the front lines like Kharkiv and Kherson as well. Gary was invited to preach and bring a word of encouragement to their congregation, which he was honored to do.



While Gary was in Ukraine, Joy had the opportunity to host the Armitage girls for four days while their parents attended meetings in Italy. Mia, Livia, and Stella are delightful young ladies whose parents are global workers and pastors (formerly the pastors of CCI before we arrived) here in Slovakia. We love spending time with them and the four of them gladly made a “girls weekend at the Peiss home” while Gary was away.

Toward the end of October, we embarked on one of our longest European road trips to date. This year's FMI Europe Fall Training gathering was in Sophia, Bulgaria, so we decided to drive with planned itinerary stops after the training to spend time with FMI global workers on the Balkan peninsula. But first the journey to Bulgaria, which was beautiful and uneventful (as we like it). We could have done one long day but chose to break it up into two shorter drives, stopping to stay near Belgrade, Serbia. We found helpful people and warm hospitality along the whole way. And the fall colors were a constant companion from Slovakia through Hungary ... and through Serbia to Bulgaria.



Gary had been asked to help with worship at the gathering, but finding sound equipment to borrow in Sophia was proving to be a bit of a challenge, so we brought some extra sound equipment with us – graciously loaned to us by City Church Bratislava. We planned and hosted one of the afternoon sessions at

the training. It was a combination of both sweet and savory with care clusters working as groups. We had a fun “make me laugh” session, with each cluster doing their best to make our Global Associate Directors, Jeff & Debbie Roper, laugh, followed by a very powerful time of the clusters praying prophetically for each person’s original design. And it was announced in Bulgaria that next year’s host city will be Bratislava!

NOVEMBER



We departed Sophia on November 1st and spent the day caravanning with the Mason Family (Sean, Vita, Eva, Oliver, Eleonora, Zigmus) to their home in Korce, Albania. We found a lovely place to enjoy lunch next to the Struma river on the way, and arrived in Korce that evening. It was our delight to spend the next two days with this amazing FMI global worker family. We loved hanging out as they did life (kids went back to school) and had fun exploring areas of Korce and Albania we didn’t get to see on our last trip there.

From Korce we made our way to Tirana to spend time with Chris and Laura Dakas – also FMI global workers who have been in Albania for 30 years. They run the Stephen Center restaurant and Bed & Breakfast, a “hub” for many expats, pastors, and missionaries from all over the world. And Chris and Laura are the model of Christian hospitality. Coincidentally, Jeff & Coco Whiston, FMI emissaries to Europe, were also visiting at the time, so we spent some time together enjoying the sights of Tirana in the company of the best hosts of the city!





We departed Tirana early (6:00 a.m.) with a long drive ahead of us through Montenegro to Zenica, Bosnia, about an hour north of Sarajevo. We stopped and spent time (and had dinner) with newly deployed FMI global workers Joshua and Hailey Wood and their son, Benjamin. We've been friends with these guys for several years as they supported and encouraged our work while on staff at Seattle Foursquare Church. It was so

good to see them in "deployed" mode themselves. Zenica is surrounded by natural beauty, but it is a difficult place to place to find people receptive to the beauty of the good news – something the local pastors were already keenly aware of, and grateful that they now have help from this amazing young family. With them only being a day's drive away from us, we look forward to connecting with Joshua and Haily regularly. But suffice it to say, after two weeks and 1,700+ miles, we were thankful to get back home!

We were only home for about four days before traveling to Cluj-Napoca, Romania for three days of in-person meetings with our FMI Europe Ministry team. Tim and Dhana Wimberly, FMI global workers to Romania, hosted us for meetings at their home. There was much discussion about the health of our global workers and ways that



we can be more supportive of what they are called to do. We also talked about how the FMI Europe Fall Training went in Sophia, and plans for next year's gathering in our home city of Bratislava. The 2024 conference will be a two-region conference with FMI MENACA (Middle East / North Africa / Central Asia) joining global workers from Europe.

Gary had been working with both the Europe and MENACA teams to see if it was feasible to hold the gathering somewhere in our area, and Bratislava proved to meet most of the criteria. The MENACA leadership team will actually take responsibility for planning the conference, but as we will host it here in our home city, we are far from off the hook! Nonetheless, we are excited to have the world come to Bratislava!



In late November we flew to Cyprus to spend Thanksgiving with our kids and grandkids in Nicosia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It was really good to be with them and experience what their new life is all about. It would be an understatement to say that it's complicated, but the Lord is giving them favor in every area of their lives. Our oldest granddaughter is seven and goes to school on the Greek side, so her journey to school involves two border and

immigration crossings every morning and afternoon. But she is such a trooper and loves the school where she is at, so carrying a passport and chatting with border guards is just part of the adventure. We just did life around Thanksgiving cooking, enjoying every moment with our kids, grandkids, and some of their new friends and neighbors.

The end of November brought our last, and maybe most powerful, City Church International Worship & Prayer Night this year. Gary led the worship portion of the gathering, and the testimonies of answered prayers have been incredible! Almost all of our CCI family have now had a taste of these gatherings, and many have embraced this intimate form of being in the presence of the Lord. We are already making plans for these gatherings in 2024, and we're hoping to even increase the frequency from four times to six times (every other month) per year.

The time and space we have been using for the worship and prayer gatherings is no longer available next year. But the Lord has opened a door to an opportunity for us to rent our own ministry space. It is very close to our current meeting location and it would accommodate the wonderful growth we are experiencing. With a few early hiccups, the negotiations seem to be back on track for something to happen the first quarter of 2024!

DECEMBER



We were doubly blessed in the last two months of this year as we also got to see our youngest daughter Emily, our son-in-law Chris, and our other two grandkids Callum and Lua. They came to spend two weeks with us – their first visit to Bratislava since our deployment in 2019. What a joy to take the littles to Christmas markets in both Budapest and Bratislava. And then have them stay with Grampa and Nana while mom and dad escaped to Vienna for a day and night themselves! A very long trip for this family (and mom is due again in April!), but we are so thankful that they came to visit!



The balance of December was of course preparing for Christmas at City Church International, and at home. We had a great turnout for our Christmas Eve morning service. There always seems to be a great group of expats who remain in Bratislava for the Christmas holiday. Joy made homemade cinnamon rolls which are always a huge hit! Gary led worship and shared a message about Jesus being our Prince of Peace, but being and bringing a peace that the world does not understand or offer. We are truly thankful to have that Peace ... and the Prince that bring it ... in our lives!

We hosted 9 at our home for dinner on Christmas Day. Five incredible CRU (Campus Crusade for Christ) interns, and our dear friends – the family of four from Latvia. And though each of us, in some way, was away from family, it was a very special Christmas with our City Church International family. Something none of us took for granted.

As is typical, and preferred by us, we ended our year with a quiet New Year's Eve. Reflective and grateful for all the Lord brought into our lives this year.

2023 / 2024 ... LOOKING BACK & LOOKING FORWARD

2023 was our first year that was as close to “Covid-free” as we believe we will ever get. All restrictions were removed (both the government ones and most of people’s mental and emotional ones), resulting in unrestricted travel and ministry work throughout the whole year. The doors seemed to be literally flung wide open to many opportunities.

Still wearing three hats – care givers for global workers across Europe, pastors in Bratislava, and compassion workers in Ukraine – we are more aware than ever of our need to leverage our work through partners and team members. And God has given us incredible favor in that in all three areas.

We entered the year hopeful that some of the things the Lord had been nudging us about (even before Covid) at City Church International would come to fruition, and God did not disappoint. The beginnings of the first ever children’s ministry for our small congregation were planned, and by the end of the year we were ready to kick things off in early 2024! And while the number of children we will initially serve (under 10 children from “confident walker” to elementary school ages) is small, the team that stepped up to be “CCI Kids” is not. Twelve plus servants ready to teach and help teachers bring the love of God and the wonder of His word to our children each week. Wow, and yay God!

We continued to seek a meeting space of our own. Each of previous attempts ended in disappointment somehow – a landlord who didn’t want a church, a space that got rented before we could finalize details with the landlord, lease agreements that turned out to be unfavorable, etc. Each time it became more difficult to summon the emotional energy to “get back out there” and continuing looking for the space the Lord would have for us. So, we recruited a good friend at CCI, and she undertook the task for us. As of this writing, we are in what we believe are the final stages of securing a space that is within a 5-minute walk of where we currently meet! A great location ... about double the space ... and a lease rate that we believe we can manage. Wow, again, and yay God!

The Lord continues to bring growth in every area He has invited us to join Him in. In 2023 we saw our largest attendance at CCI, we added Care Clusters for a growing FMI Europe family, and we added new (and strengthened existing) partners in Ukraine. And the Lord continues to bring others alongside us to help us leverage our own time and resources.

We are very thankful for our time in 2023 with you, our team and supporters. Only small moments to be sure as we were in the USA in May and June, but so important to us as you reassured us of your love and your support of our work. And of course we are especially thankful for time with our kids and grandkids, as that will always be the most difficult part of saying yes to serving on the field with Jesus.

Before the final revision of this report was even written, much of 2024 was charted on the calendar. You might think we are really good at forward planning, but we feel that some of that is a product, again, of “too much on the plate”. We are learning to make space for the higher priority things first, and then allowing others as the Lord leads us.

Much of our focus will be on connecting with FMI global workers in their places of ministry. It is a very high value of ours to have face-to-face time with those whom the Lord has called us to serve. So, we will travel (by car, train, plane, bus, etc.) to be with and deepen relationships with people that are the heartbeat of Jesus work in Europe through Foursquare Missions International. Each individual, couple, and family an oasis of salt and light in their neighborhood, village or city, and country.

Three big “happenings” will mark the largest parts of effort and energy this year.

(1) The (believing in faith) move of CCI from Sreznevskeho to Vajnorska. If you have lived through any type of community of faith transition, then you know it’s not just about the physical – but about the emotional and spiritual as well. We are praying that it will not only be a blessing to our own community of faith but will serve to be a new and refreshed expression of God’s love and presence in the neighborhood where we reside.

(2) Our planned 4-week trip to the USA to support our kids as they welcome their 3rd child, and the two of the four weeks we will spend building additional support for our work. We would love it if you would partner with us by joining our support team, or by helping us to connect with individuals and churches who would have a heart to support the work Jesus has invited us to join Him in here!

(3) Our hosting of the 2024 combined FMI Europe and MENACA (Middle East North Africa Central Asia) fall training right here in Bratislava. Over 150 adults and kids will converge on our beautiful city to receive rest, encouragement, and tools for their ongoing call to reach their nations for Christ. We are so excited to have them!

We will of course continue to wear each of our three ministry hats faithfully, trusting the Lord to guide us in what each of those looks like in 2024. Our work in Ukraine, in particular, is an area where we are seeking greater discernment for the path forward. We do not feel that our season of work in Ukraine is at an end, but the provision specially earmarked for this work has almost all been used now. So, we are looking for wisdom on moving forward either with additional provision that the Lord will bring, or in different ways that will allow us to work through a different financial model.

Last but not least, we will renew our Slovak visas in March. Hard to believe it will have already been five years! We expect that this process will go smoothly, but we are ever mindful and in prayer over documents, favor from government officials, and timing. We have heard enough stories about visa issues that we are never casual and always seeking the Lord’s help to make the path straight for us to continue living and working where He has called us!

FINANCIAL UPDATE

Our support remained very strong in 2023, but down about 5% from 2022. However, this was only 0.5% under what we budgeted. Only one supporter left our team, but it was due to life changes – something that also affected the giving amounts of some of our other supporters. But several support team members increased their giving, offsetting most of the attrition, providing nearly the total amount of support we budgeted!

In 2023, support funds continued to come in specifically earmarked for our work in Ukraine. And we account for and administer these funds separate from our other support. We are incredibly thankful and humbled by this giving also. Thank you!

We are earnestly praying that the Lord would move on the hearts of those who would want to continue (or start) investing in this work. There is so much to be done and so many in Ukraine who we are supporting and encouraging while their country is still in the midst of a terrible war. Thank you for joining us in prayer for this provision!

We made some “educated” adjustments to our Ministry Expense budget for 2023, given the ongoing changes in Foursquare’s reimbursable expense policy (details in our 2022 Annual Report to Ministry Partners). Essentially, there are expenses that Foursquare will reimburse directly, and expenses for which we must request additional 1099 funds to cover, thus making these ministry expenses taxable. As a result, though our out of pocket living and ministry expenses haven’t increased significantly over the last 3 years, the taxes we pay have.

Despite those expense reimbursement changes, we have been able to work to minimize, where possible, our “taxable” expenses so that there is no pressure to cut back on or sacrifice ministry work. We did exceed our overall (taxable and non-taxable) expense budget in 2023 ... but only by 4.3%. About half of that 4.3% was for unplanned (but very welcome) expenses to seed and start the CCI Kids ministry at City Church International. The other half was for an increase in monthly living expenses due to the initiation of Joy’s Medicare.

We have increased our living expense budget for 2024 by about 7% to cover inflation-induced cost of living increases in living expenses and health care (insurance premiums, etc.). We have also initiated a monthly retirement contribution, and are thankful, given our tax situation, to make them via Foursquare’s pre-tax 403b plan.

We have budgeted for an increase in income in 2024 and are making efforts to both deepen and broaden our support base ahead of changes coming in 2025. And while these increases (Lord willing they will come in 2024) will be a boost in the coming year, some or all of it will be offset by our investment in the FMI worker support team, funded through the worker “fee” to be assessed on all worker contributions in January of 2025.

CHANGES COMING IN 2025

Foursquare is building a more comprehensive system for both donor and member care – one that will accommodate a greater number of global workers. As the FMI global worker team expands, the people and resources needed to support them will need to expand as well. And while Foursquare has historically funded the FMI support team out of the tithes and offerings of US churches, it will now move to a more globally accepted (and scalable) model of using a portion of the support given to all FMI global workers.

Starting in January of 2025, 10% of each support dollar that we receive will be “withdrawn” from our support account and used to fund the training, deployment, and care team that supports FMI’s global workers. We wholeheartedly support the expanding work of the gospel and are working to raise the additional funds we need to cover our contribution through increases in existing gifts, and through new supporters.

God’s provision through our supporters is incredible! He has always provided 100% of our budgeted Living Expenses and Ministry Expenses through your faithful hands. Thank you! We are confident that the Lord will always provide what we need!

We are so honored and blessed by your faithfulness. Thank you! We are humbled when your gift arrives each month and humbled that you would even increase that investment in 2023 – wow! An incredible testimony of God’s provision encouragement!

Your faithful support is practical, spiritual, and emotional encouragement in the ministry work we are engaged in every day! Our everyday expenses lovingly being taken cared for by God, through the faithful investment of each of the individuals, families, and churches who have said “yes”!

Thank you! We could not and would not want to do this without you!

OUR SUPPORT TEAM

You, our supporters, are an incredibly critical part of the team Jesus has invited to join Him in His work here in Slovakia, across Europe, and in Ukraine. We pray you are hearing His encouragement as you fulfill your roles in prayer, support, and encouragement of us and those we minister with and to. There are so many grateful for what Jesus is doing through FMI and City Church International, and they are very aware there is an incredible team of prayer and support warriors behind us. Thank you for continually saying “yes” to being the fuel for all that Jesus is doing as we work with Him.

Communication will always be a deeply held value of our ministry. We continue to invest in monthly communications through printed & emailed newsletters, through written correspondence and Zoom/FaceTime calls, and through some presence on social media. We hope you are taking time to connect – especially by reading our newsletter. Though it is truly a “snippet” of our life and work here, it represents a true picture of that which Jesus is doing in and through us.

We are grateful for each note of encouragement in response to a monthly newsletter or social media post. It reminds us that you still have your hearts connected and ready to pray and respond as the Lord leads you. Thank you for staying connected!

We are so thankful for those who came and visited in 2023. As usual, it was a delicate dance of coordinating schedules with all that we (and you) have on our plates. We will always try to make space as there is no better way to get a sense of the world we live in, and the atmosphere we operate in and minister from, than by coming and serving with us. Would that be you sometime in the future? Reach out to us if you sense the Lord speaking to you in that way – we would welcome the opportunity to explore what that looks like!

VISION (Looking Forward)

We still sense the Lord asking us to stay where we are to carry on faithfully wearing the three hats He has given us – leaders of global worker care for FMI Europe, pastors of City Church International in Bratislava, and ministers of encouragement and compassion in the war-torn nation of Ukraine. We are both at peace and excited to continue to do just that! We are always listening to His wisdom for changes in direction, ministry content, partnerships, and pace. And we continue to be open to whatever He would ask.

We will continue to purposefully seek God’s wisdom on transitioning the lead role at CCI. We are ready to start that transition now as it can often be an all-consuming role and we really feel the call to invest more time into worker care. We have, in fact, taken deliberate steps to start the search for new lead pastors. Not in an aggressive “beating the bushes” way, but in a “higher level of awareness and discernment” way. We know and trust it is only God who will call and bring others to serve in the lead role, just as He did with us. So, we will trust Him for that, and for the transition process once He shows us who.

Our resolve to continue traveling into Ukraine is certain, but the financial support with which we will do that is less so. Unless additional funds are given specifically for Ukraine in 2024, the remaining amounts of support received in 2022-23 will be used in the coming year. The war, however, continues. And the needs there continue. So, we will continue to pray for provision, and continue to tell the story of Ukraine, believing the Lord will give us a path forward and wisdom on how to continue to serve.

Starting from a place of growth and God-produced fruit in all three ministry areas during 2023, we feel we will have a great start out of the blocks to begin seeking and carrying out what He has in store for us in 2024!

MINISTRY GOALS

We continue to work with our FMI Europe Lead Care Team that includes us and three other FMI Europe workers. This team plans, initiates, and oversees care for all of FMI Europe. Our FMI Europe Care Cluster network (now 9 clusters!) remains very healthy. We will focus extra attention on the Care Cluster Leaders themselves, spending more in-person time with each of them in 2024.

We will also continue to travel and be present with other global workers when we can in the coming year. Seeing life through their homes, their countries, their culture, and their family, is the best way to build relationships and trust. We feel that we are now well known across Europe, and that our heart and intentions to care and bless are recognized and affirmed. And we want to be able to respond to specific care requests when they come up – another reason to build margins into our very packed schedule.

We will continue to invest in the City Church International leadership team whom we refer to as our CCI Servant Leader Council. Changes will likely be coming in its makeup, however, with one key member scheduled to have a baby and be out on maternity leave for at least 3 months in the summer, and another key couple on the verge of saying “yes” to deploying to east Africa as global workers themselves. God will provide for the transitions and for those who will step in to take their places.

With the start of our CCI children’s ministry (CCI Kids) in early 2024, we will continue to pour early needed resources and support into this ministry’s growth at its young stage. The team is strong and excited to serve, so we will focus on their needs and health as this “answered prayer” ministry gets off the ground. Significant space has been “drawn in” at the new space, and all that is needed to make this ministry thrive will be provided.

We know that much energy (physical, emotional, spiritual) will be expended on moving City Church International to its own ministry space, believing it will happen in February or March. And, of course, we will be praying and asking for needed resources (€34,000) for this, just like we are praying for the needed resources for Ukraine. God knows every need and we believe He is ready to fund the need in the same way He made a way for each of the opportunities that require the provision!

We have continued to refine our work in Ukraine, working with both FMI and non-FMI partners from the very west (Lviv) to the very east (Donetsk). We could not have handpicked better ourselves, the faithful and compassionate partners that God has given us to work with.

So, our focus will continue to be (with and through these partners) on aiding the hurting population (food, clothes, medicine) while doing all we can to also encourage and support those we are working with. Help and encouragement are precious and needed commodities for those who are daily helping their fellow Ukrainians, so we will pray for the provision to continue making 4-6 trips in the coming year. And when peace comes to Ukraine, we will ask the Lord how our response should be adjusted, expecting that He will open doors to provide help with rebuilding and restoration.

Anastasiia Prysiashniuk (Nastiia) continues to be the point person for much of our work in Ukraine. She has been working for City Church part-time, and we have also funded her partially by your support for our work in Ukraine. But she has now been hired full time as an administrative assistant by City Church Bratislava, and they are more than willing to make time for her to continue traveling with us to Ukraine and coordinating our work there! We are thankful she is staying on the team and continuing her work with us!

PERSONAL GOALS / PRAYER REQUESTS

Language:

Gary and Joy want to make significant progress learning the Slovak language in 2024, while Gary will also continue learning Ukrainian. We need discipline to create and protect boundaries for language study.

Friendships:

The life of a global worker often includes many people they know, but very few, if any, that true and transparent “friends” right where they live. The same can be said for us. And though the type of friendship we have with peers in Europe are closer to what we seek, the distance makes these “once in a while” encounters as best.

Those you pastor and ministry to always consider you a pastor, creating mutual “boundaries” where that shepherd/sheep relationship is always dominant. But global workers need and desire friendships that are relaxed, easy, comfortable, transparent, and without expectations defined by other than who we are ... not what we do. We would appreciate your prayers for this.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES WITH OUR PARTNERS

We are thankful for those who come to Slovakia to partner with us in our work. We are frequently asked about short-term mission opportunities, and our response is typically framed around the three areas of ministry where we are currently joining the Lord in His work here:

COMPASSION FOR UKRAINE NOW / REBUILDING IN THE FUTURE

Compassion for a war-torn nation. Coming with funds for humanitarian aid and assisting the team in supporting and encouraging our ministry partners across Ukraine as we and they serve the Ukrainian people. If this appeals to you, and depending on timing, it would be a raise-funds-and-travel with approval for work in a war-active country. We are taking 4-6 8-day trips per year with this ministry focus.

Rebuilding and restoration. Coming with funds and hands to help rebuild structures and spirits. Most likely assisting with construction and encouragement in a church setting. This work has already begun in some areas but will accelerate when the war is over and lower-risk access is possible. If this appeals to you, and depending on timing, it would be a raise-funds-and-wait-for-a-green-light (no war) situation. We have several contacts there and would choose the opportunity that best suits the timing and team.

PASTORING IN BRATISLAVA

Blessing young families. Coming with funds and people to put on a marriage retreat or seminar. Our church is small with a lot of young families, and it would be great if this could somehow involve a husband and wife – teaching and pouring into young families. The other members of your team could help facilitate and watch / engage kids while mom and dad have free time to learn and be blessed.

CARING FOR FMI EUROPE GLOBAL WORKERS

Coming with funds and a team to bless Global Workers. We could envision an event that was “attached” to a Foursquare Europe or FMI Europe gathering but set aside to bless and minister specifically to global workers. Some of the team would hang with / engage with / bless MKs, while the rest of the team creates and facilitates sessions to bless their moms and dads. Fun outings (eating, recreation, etc.) ... massages ... women things (hair, nails, etc.) ... times of prayer and encouragement.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER GLOBAL WORKERS

Don't see something above that floats your boat? There may be collaboration opportunities that we can facilitate with one of our other FMI Europe global workers or global worker families. Share with us what's on your heart, and we're happy to build bridges and help when you come.

WHAT WE ARE HEARING

We believe relief is coming for a still overfull plate. 2023 was once again overwhelming in so many ways. When one is stretched thin, they are tired from the stretching and discouraged from the way their work must be shared among so many. Such was the case for us. We believe the Lord is saying that relief (change) is on the way.

In 2023 we established midweek prayer and worship. We hear the call to "continue and deepen" this discipline, and will look soon after the believed for move for making a more frequent schedule and commitment to this. We have 4 prayer and worship gatherings in 2023, and are hoping to do at least 6 in 2024.

We are still hearing "continue working in Ukraine" and "be ready for a changing landscape in Ukraine". We don't know what the role will look like, but we feel that the work we've been doing and the relationships we've developed will provide opportunities to serve the Ukrainian people after peace in Ukraine is declared.

PRAYER REQUESTS FOR THE COMING YEAR

Thank you for your continued prayer support. We feel the many and faithful prayers of those who converse with God on our behalf!

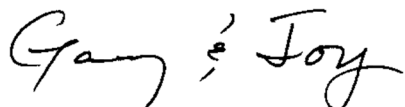
Provision	Favor and growth in our support to meet our 2025 FMI worker fee and continue meeting our monthly Living & Ministry expense needs.
Health	Spiritual, emotional, physical. Especially sabbath and exercise rhythms and faithfulness.
Help	Growth of and smooth transitions for the CCI Servant Leader Council. A person to lead the CCI children's ministry (CCI Kids), now being led by committee.
New Pastors	Faithfully following the process of identifying and passing the lead pastor baton at City Church International.
Grace	In and with all relationships
Learning	Language

CONCLUSION

2023 – the word of this year was “endurance”. We are so thankful for being invited to join Jesus in so many ways. And we are continuing to do what God has called us to do in the midst of very challenging circumstances. Every year we become better prepared for the unexpected. We are thankful for every moment, place, and purpose that the Lord has entrusted us with this year.

Our testimony remains one of trusting the Lord and trusting those whom the Lord has put in our lives to support, train, encourage, and equip. Thank you, Lord, and thank you, all, for your trust and for the part you are playing in this amazing story!

God is good ... all the time!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary & Joy".