

Armitage 2011 Year in Review

Sheldon, Anna, Mia and Livia Armitage

This was another full and busy year which started out much differently than it ended, but we believe that it has also ended better than it started! Below are the highlights of what we did in Nitra, Slovakia and around Europe.

NEW ROLES

Sheldon took on a new role within the Eurasia Region for the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada. After much prayer, soul searching and a few interesting incidents, he accepted a role as the Assistant Regional Director. His main areas of responsibility include helping the Regional Director lead the vision and strategy; providing some support and care to our missionaries spread out from England to Kazakhstan, developing new outreach initiatives; fostering and encouraging collaboration between missionaries and with nationals; and promoting and recruiting for the region. This role fits Sheldon's life calling (to help people accomplish great things) and our passion to see the Kingdom of God revealed more in Eurasia.

The great thing about the role is that it puts us into great connection with our fellow missionaries and also allows us to stay in Nitra, Slovakia. This means that Anna was able to start her university course in journalism. She is now studying at a local university towards attaining her Masters in journalism for the sake of using it to help combat human trafficking in Europe. She hopes to do this through raising awareness and being a voice for those being caught in modern day slavery. So far the studying has been going well and Anna is excelling in her courses, though it has not always been easy as she is starting her third trimester with our third child!

EURASIA NOW

Before Sheldon took on the new role, he was a member of the Eurasia Now Lead Team. This team helps serve the Regional Director through support, strategy, encouragement and prayer. Sheldon took on some extra responsibilities with this team before transitioning into the Assistant Regional Directors role. This included the development of a web portal, helping develop the program for the regional retreat and connect with missionaries around the region. This role also includes different meetings and strategy sessions which Sheldon was involved in.

WOMEN'S TEAM

In July, Anna led a team of women from Canada on a tour of cities in Europe. The purpose of this trip was to raise awareness about women's issues and see some ministries that are involved in different areas. They went to Berlin to work with Patricia Green and Alabaster Jar, a ministry that works with women caught in prostitution and human trafficking. They then went to Serbia to work with Vesna Radeka, a woman who started the first Crisis Pregnancy Center in the Balkans. The next stop was Slovakia, where the team worked in a juvenile detention center for young girls, some of whom had babies of their own. The final stop was to Vienna, Austria to learn more about a ministry called Herzwerk that also works with victims of human trafficking and prostitution. The trip was a huge success and we are planning to do another in the near future.

As part of our ongoing engagement in fighting human trafficking, both of us have gotten involved with an organization called the European Freedom Network. This is a part of the European Evangelical Alliance and the goal is to network together churches, NGOs and organizations around Europe who are working in this area for greater effectiveness. This year Anna helped edit and produce a corporate prayer journal to raise awareness of different organizational needs. Sheldon is part of a planning team for a strategic consultation to take place in Bulgaria in 2012.

ALPHA

We were able to launch and lead the first every ALPHA course in our city in March. This 10 week introduction to Christianity was held in a local restaurant and had 12 people attend. Through the course we identified key leaders who we helped train and release to run another ALPHA course in October. Also in October we started the ALPHA Marriage course which is focused on strengthening marriages and introducing people to Jesus. So far this course has been incredibly successful with 8 couples attending. We were able to raise over \$7000 for the development, advertisement and launch of these three ALPHA courses and we will be doing more courses in 2012. We see ALPHA as a key strategy for introducing people to Jesus, training leaders and building community.

I LOVE MY CITY

This was our 3rd year of the "I LOVE MY CITY" campaign. We were part of the planning team and were responsible for running two of the main events during the outreach. The last two years saw teams from Canada join us for our week of practical evangelism and outreach to Nitra. This year was slightly different as we had no teams. Instead of just one week of intense ministry, we did multiple events throughout the summer including Family Film Nights at the community center, an amazing children's outreach in the park, a great teen camp and a playground renovation that saw more people from the community involved than members from the church! Even though we didn't have international involvement, we believe this year was a success because church members really rose up and took the project on as their own.

SLOVAK NATIONAL YOUTH TEAM

Another key area of ministry that we were involved in this year was with VDM (the national youth and young adults team for the Apostolic Churches of Slovakia). Under the leadership of Vlado Zak (a Vanguard Bible College graduate), VDM has become an incredible ministry that trains and equips youth leaders as well as reaches the youth of Slovakia. We were asked back in 2010 to serve on the national leadership team, to help bring vision, strategy and encouragement to the youth pastors of Slovakia. Each year we help host and teach at two youth leader retreats. One of the highlights of this year was the launch of the first ever Youth Convention (YC) Slovakia. We worked in partnership with Mike Love from YC Alberta to put on a 5 day youth convention in the mountains of Slovakia. Over 300 youth and young adults attended and every youth pastor in the nation was involved at some aspect. It was a great time of preaching, teaching, worship and fun, with many youth receiving Christ, being filled with the Spirit and experiencing significant life change. In 2012 we are believing for and working towards 700 youth from around the country to be at the event.

FAMILY

This year marked more transitions for us as a family. Anna is expecting our third child which is due in March 2012. The doctor has told us that it is another daughter and we are extremely pleased about that. Mia started first grade this year at a school for gifted children in Nitra. She is extremely bright and is excelling in her classes and socially. Livia is in her second year of kindergarten (a three year process in Slovakia) and is loving it. She is very active and a born leader. Both girls love art and music and are involved in different music, dance and art classes.

In May, we moved into a bigger apartment to accommodate our growing family. This was before Anna became pregnant so we may need to move again! Actually, our new apartment is big enough for a third child and even though we had to leave the location we loved, it has been a real blessing to have more space. We also celebrated 11 years of marriage and were able to take our first holiday as a couple (without kids!) in almost 8 years. This was a great blessing and came just before the intense busyness of the summer months.

SUMMARY

People often ask us, "what do you do in a average day?" This is a hard question to answer for a couple of reasons. The first is that we try not to live average. That's not what Christians are called to! The second is because of the nature of missionary work, especially a leadership role that Sheldon now serves in, things are constantly changing. Some days we are connecting with our missionaries and providing support to them, working with them on projects or developing new strategies. Some days it is working with PAOC head office on how to increase missions awareness in Canada and get more people on the field. Some days it is working with national leaders here in Slovakia and Europe through training seminars and strategic projects. Some days it is helping raise up local leaders through teaching, training or mentoring. Some days it is preparing for ALPHA. Every day is different because the mission is dynamic.

Next year we will see the arrival of baby #3 which will change the dynamics of our family. We will be launching a number of new initiatives in Eurasia including a new focus on Muslim Outreach, Women's Issues, Training Leaders and Church Planting through Eurasia Now. Also we hope to see ALPHA Marriage running at least twice as well as regular ALPHA and Student ALPHA on the university campuses here in Nitra. There will be lots of activity but we also believe lots of fruitfulness as we continue to follow and serve Jesus in Europe.