

It is really exciting to meet the people who are driven by a vision because they want to make a difference...

I had this very special occasion during my recent visit in Austria. Here is an interview with the church planting team in Donauhof, a district of Vienna where new Baptist congregation is being planted. The team members are pastors: Walter, David, Mira and a pastoral assistant – Carina.

Question: *What are the beginnings of this new church planting project?*

Answer: The Donauhof church plant is a part of “Project Gemeinde” which has the goal to multiply Baptist congregations in Vienna and Austria. It actually started in Krummgasse because there had been not enough space and an opportunity to move over to a new location in Donauhof has occurred. The vision has become the reality in September 2015 when a new mission team has been formed. Walter has started this work and David from England joined the team. Mira has finished her theological studies in Cologne, Germany and felt called to be a pastor in Vienna. Carina is studying theology in Vienna and working as a pastoral assistant at the same time. So the new project has grown out of the real needs and is implemented under the leadership of this team. This is the first evangelical congregation in that district of our big city.



Q: *Why this particular location has been selected and who are the target group?*

A: The target group are young families and young people that are not particularly religious. Some of them had no religious experience at all and others did have a bad one in the past...

About 1/3 of our people are Christians and the remaining 2/3 are non-Christians. They all bring honest questions and doubts with them. The life during the week is of crucial importance, not just Sunday services. They study the Bible in groups in homes and meet in the Donauhof coffee shop. This location has been selected because there is no evangelical witness and the district is growing as new people move in. Last year the Austrian Baptists bought a part of building that has about 1 thousand square meters on the ground floor and additional 250 square meters in the cellars. The major renovation is taking place right now and many of our people are involved as volunteers under the leadership of mission team. When the renovation is finished the facility will provide much comfortable space for many activities. There will be a worship hall, regular coffee shop, several other rooms for meetings and a large hall for big events or conferences. The renovation requires much effort and significant finances. The plan is to open it in October of 2016.



Q: *What are the methods of ministry?*

A: The basic method of ministry is a coffee shop. Sharing life plays very important role and the people are encouraged to stay after every service to eat together or have a drink and chat. The reaching out to new people is possible by personal invitations. The services are held from the very beginning on the ground floor and often happens that other people come in as they see us through the windows and are attracted. There are also regular street festivals and the most recent one drew about 1 thousand local people. It is also important to keep up with other Baptists, so all existing congregations meet together from time to time.

Q: *What is your vision for future? What would you like to see in one year from now and in five years, and in ten years?*

A: We want to build and develop relationships with people who have shown up and see them integrated by sharing life together. We encourage all to be natural, inspire creativity and try not impose any traditional forms on new people. We promote symbiotic relationships and the refugees are very much in the loop too. We plan to start several new groups during the next year. Also work among children and youth should be developed. Inviting some trainees from other congregations may reproduce the ministry. In five years we want to see many mature Christians who are responsible for the next generation of disciples. Important would be integration and possibly starting another congregation. In ten years we plan to have ten new congregations in Austria and Germany.

Q: *What are the challenges in this ministry?*

A: There is much to do and our people are very busy. Because of this we have to prioritize all the time. Constant problem is a shortage of time and money... We need to develop local partnerships to support the work.

Q: *What are the biggest blessings and joys in this work?*

A: Team work, for sure! Without team work nothing could be achieved. There are about 40 mission workers that work on different mission initiatives of the “Project Gemeinde”. Great joy is to be with people, experience their natural diversity and see how God works out unity among them... It is particularly rewarding to see how they grow in faith. We realize all the time that most of our people would not be in church if not for this ministry. Church must be very practical for them so the relevant issues of society are discussed and resolved in church, like very existential and social issues, for example freedom and refuge or climate etc. The recipients of refuge ministry develop their own projects which is very exciting too. The multiplication has started and is in a sort of “perpetual motion” process that can’t be stopped any longer...



More info about the Donauhof Church Project on website: www.projekt-gemeinde.at

Prayer Requests:

1. good relationships and contact to neighbours in the district;
2. good resourcing of ministry to enable sustainable, long-term ministry across the whole church;
3. an openness to the leadership of the Spirit to see where God is leading.

In Christ,

Daniel Trusiewicz

EBF Mission Coordinator

Planting new churches together! For the glory of God!

