

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Austria! It is the perfect day to send you all an update on what is happening with us here! I am sitting upstairs in the meeting room at the youth hostel where we hold our yearly Winter Camp. It has huge glass windows that allow me look out at the alps and the town of Mittersill down in the valley. I wish I could send you the spectacular view that I am enjoying—and I actually did take photos—but unfortunately the newest upgrade on my computer eliminated the photo stationery option that I have been using for years. As I sit here, I am tempted to feel frustrated and irritated but instead I am asking God to give me the grace to see it as an adventure and an opportunity to learn something new.

Today is the first day of our Winter Camp and we ask you to pray for the 50 plus people attending as participants or workers. After 3 years of this being a week focused on young adults, we are now back to being a camp for teenagers. (God has given us a whole crop of new teens!) Pray that the Holy Spirit would be powerfully at work in each of us. This week has been blanketed in prayer and we are anticipating that the Lord will do much! Our topic this year is “The glory of Jesus!”

IF I had my photo stationary template, I would be sending you three photos with this update. The first would be of the glorious view out the window in front of me. The second would be of one of the beautiful old castles in the region that we drive by each time we come here. The third would be of an Austrian flag. And if I added a fourth, it might be of a sign that shows a kangaroo crossed out with a label that says “No kangaroos in Austria!” All of this ties in with an announcement which we want to pass on to you all.

As of this past week, Scott and I have been awarded Austrian citizenship! For now we have both Austrian and USA citizenship but in the fall sometime, we will be officially ending our USA citizenship as is required by law in Austria. This is a decision we made years ago and which the Lord finally gave us freedom to pursue this past year. 30 years ago we felt God’s calling to serve him here in Austria and we said yes. Approximately 20 years ago we again felt his calling but this time it was for a life long calling, to remain here until the end. And we said yes.

All of you receiving this letter have supported us in various ways; through prayers, finances, letters, cards, gifts, phone calls and just interest in our ministry here over the years. It is you all, dear family and friends, who have made our ministry here possible and who have invested so much into our lives. Therefore it is really important for us to communicate to you that from our perspective, nothing has changed that will impact that negatively. We still love the USA and are so grateful to have grown up there. We still have family in the USA including the majority of our precious children and grandchildren. We are still maintaining all our connections with friends and supporters in the USA. We will still be coming back to visit as often as we can and to keep you personally updated on all that God is doing here. We still want to minister to and serve in all the churches that support us in any way we can when we are there.

As far as we can tell, the only thing that will change significantly for those of you in the USA is that we will never retire back to the States and we will never be able to come back and live/visit there for more than a few weeks or months at a time.

However for our Austrian friends and family here, things have changed very drastically in deed, especially in the way they view us. Recently we said good-bye to another American couple who have served in Austria for nearly 40 years. It felt so sad and for many here, it is the feeling of being abandoned. This week Scott was visiting with a godly, Austrian leader in his 70’s named Willi. He has watched one missionary family after another leave over the years and he was expressing how hard it is, how painful! When Scott shared with him that we are staying and that we now have Austrian citizenship he was deeply, deeply touched and joyful. The fact that we

are staying has suddenly opened up unexpected opportunities that we hadn't necessarily anticipated.

Recently we have experienced both believers and non-believers opening up their hearts to us in new ways now that they have heard we are staying for good. Scott is getting even more requests from Austrian leaders to mentor them personally or as a church leadership group. This week, Monday to Wednesday, he was at a leadership conference and he spent most of his time talking through ministry and personal issues with a German missionary who was also attending. As well, answering the question "why are you doing this?" is opening doors to give our testimony to non-believers.

In closing we ask you, dear ones, to pray for us in this last stretch of legal transition. Also pray that God will open up more and more opportunities for us to give our testimony to non-believers, including our government officials, both USA and Austrian.

In Him together always!

Scott and Leslie