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The IPM Newsletter

Michael & Sally O'Connor



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Technology Triumphs, Film at 11

Our move to this new format of delivery by e instead of *snail* was one of great trepidation brought on by necessity.

Aside from the immediacy this venue offers we hoped to be able to use several mediums for expression which

Roses Are Red, Part 2

by **Sally Klein O'Connor**

"I met Sally at the conference in Oswiecim last year. She came afterwards to visit Nürnberg and we went together to Dachau. It was typical for God that I had a breakdown in front of the first crematorium on German earth and Sally as a Jew was consoling me. After that we had seen the beautiful garden that God made in Dachau at the palace. I could start to realize, that God has given us Germans a chance to live, although we did the most cruel thing which I could think of to his people. I'm very thankful, that God gives us Germans, who always felt our sin, relief of it and that the shame – which is there for every German generation – could be taken away by the blood of Jesus. My experience is, that this could only (be) given to us by Jews, who speak to us and pray with and for us..."

Dagmar Menzel

Nuremberg, Germany

several mediums for expression which had previously eluded our capability and our pocketbook.

So far the color photos are working out nicely. We hope they help you experience our mission more fully than graphic-free essays of 3,000 words in 8 point font could ever do.

We would like to point out we are experiencing a formatting problem that appears as uneven line spacing in the text. Please excuse our bugs. We're hoping to resolve the problem for a future edition.

With this issue another goal in our multi-media agenda is realized. We have linked to a very short video of the candle lighting ceremony at Sally's outdoor concert in Bergen, Germany, with her singing in the background. It's really quite beautiful to watch—especially once you've read the story behind the event.

Next up, we are hoping to institute holographic images of Sally or Michael emerging from your computer screen to lay hands on you for individual prayer. There are still a some kinks in the system, so realization of this dream may be delayed a few issues.

We hope you enjoy the video and part 2 of Sally's adventure.

"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland."

Isaiah 43: 18-19



Breakfast in Bergen with Dagmar

After we packed up the van to drive to the small town of Bergen in Germany, we said goodbye to Karen and Mark, who drove back to Poland. The rest of our team from A Tour of Roses were all very sorry to see them go as they had contributed so richly to our time together. Magda surprised me by changing her mind about going back to Poland, deciding instead to go with us the rest of the way to Bergen. Karen had been translating for her, and although Magda knew enough English to make herself understood, there was now no one on the team who could really speak with her in Polish. And she didn't know any of us as well as she knew Karen and Mark. But Magda had made up her mind. Dagmar would join us in Bergen as would Igor from the Jews for Jesus branch in Essen, Germany.

When we finally arrived we were met by Katharina Hoopmann, the Events Coordinator for the town council. She had worked out all the details for the Saturday night concert in the park at Bergen, and made sure there were posters in all the important places in town. She welcomed us our first

Concerts



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night, with a lavish feast. I think there must have been at least 4 or 5 courses. While it's true we were all very hungry and would have been grateful for the menu at McDonalds, this dinner was absolutely amazing. And then of course there was dessert! Crème Brulee in a glass dessert cup with real chocolate at the bottom. We felt very welcomed and we went to bed extremely full of good wishes and wonderful food.



ATOR team dines in style with host Katarina (center right)

Hannah an American team member, wrote in our community journal: *“Giving out roses in Bergen was a joy filled experience. The people seemed so happy—only a few were too busy to stop and hear what we were saying about God’s love, roses, and Sally’s concert. Many knew her name and about the concert because of the articles placed in newspapers by Katherina.”*

there simply:

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A kiosk trumpets Sally's evening concert in the park

Igor and I handed out roses together, as we walked down the main street of Bergen. We gave a rose to one of the young British soldiers stationed at the military base in Bergen Belsen. He was incredulous that we would give him a rose. He couldn't believe it was free, and that it was for him. He was deeply touched and said we had made his day. Dagmar met up with the chaplain for the base and also gave her a rose. Heather was impressed by what we were doing and was hoping there might be some way we could come to the base on Sunday morning for chapel, which we ended up doing.

The town council paid for a stage to be built in the park for the concert and also a canopy to be hung over the benches. The canopy was very elegant and the stage was impressive. About 150-200 people turned out for the concert. It was an intimate crowd.



Park workers raise the canopy where Sally will sing

There was one moment toward the end that was especially meaningful. The team had passed out candles to everyone in the crowd and at a certain point, as I was talking they began lighting them. Young and old were passing the light from candle to candle, illuminating the hope that often lies dormant in our hearts. This is a tradition that happens every Christmas at our church as we sing *O Holy Night*. Each person lights the wick of their neighbor's candle and the room fills up with light as people pass it along. I was standing on the stage with Dagmar, who was translating, when the overhead lights cut off over the audience. We stared out at a field of tiny flames flickering, each expressing the hope that God wants to heal the deep wounds of loss in Germans and Jews alike.

To view a short video of the candle lighting ceremony during Sally's concert in Berger Park please [CLICK HERE](#).

In a tour filled with moments of wonder this particular snapshot remains deeply embedded in my soul. A wave of tears rushed me and it was hard to sing, as all these people lifted their candles up in response to my invitation to remember—the Jewish people, their own people, and the hope for healing that can be found in God.

Afterward the mayor came up to greet me and thank me. A priest also came up, visibly moved, and blessed me. There were many others as well. As the techies took down the stage and lights, Katharina opened her house to us, inviting us for refreshments. It was an interesting gathering since all of us on the team were believers and very elated about the evening. Katharina, her husband and friends, as they pointed out to me, were “not that religious.” At one point, as we engaged in conversation, a friend of Katharina’s commented on how rare it was for someone to think the way I did about the relationship between Germans and Jews. She said I was very idealistic. Next to me Steve, an American team member, boomed: “It’s Jesus! It’s because she loves Jesus!”

And so it is.

Too often we settle for safe, comfortable lives lived within our perception of the acceptable lines of Christianity. Many of us are so wounded, that is all we feel able to hope for. Something safe. Something *normal*. We are *forgiven* and that is enough. Now and then we are even touched by His nearness and it is almost too much for us. It is at once fearful and wonderful!



Diana and Mark rise early to clean and tag roses

Missions, we tell ourselves, are for those more passionate souls we are happy to place in some category of Christianity above us. Perhaps we think to ourselves, *how can I speak to others about Him? I'm too broken. It's not my gift. God could never use me.* Underneath it all we're scared, afraid of being rejected, afraid we'll fail—maybe even afraid we'll succeed and it will obligate us in some way we don't want. Even so—we are called! (Matthew 28:19)



**ATOR team flush with roses,
preparing to extend God's love to the people of Bergen**

It was Jesus who led me to Poland and Germany. Quite honestly, only Jesus could have brought me there to extend myself in His love. And the surprising thing is although it began in my mind as a burden, it was not a burden at all. I experienced so much joy in places I had only associated with pain, because I felt the presence of God and His love for the people around us. But then it is Jesus who reaches out through us every time we extend our hearts beyond those way-too-comfortable boundaries of our faith, to touch the hand of someone broken and forgotten. He does not forget nations or individuals. As Hagar said of Him in her particular wilderness, *"You are the God who sees me."* (Genesis 16:13)

We are our own limitation. Afraid to see where God is looking, afraid to hear what He might be saying, we turn away from the opportunity to realize our true purpose in this life—what we were created for. Instead, we choose to color carefully inside the lines of our understanding of Christianity as we decide it applies to us, and our faith slowly withers and dies.



**Worship inside Birkenau at the corridors where Jews
were marched to their deaths**

It is Jesus who tells me through Paul's writings: "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer." That means all our acceptable justifiable, and all too predictable Christian prejudice is out the window. We are not supposed to think about *anyone* in the same way we did before we came into relationship with Jesus. We are called to love—not judge. That is God's job and He says, "*mercy triumphs over judgment.*" (James 2:13)

Loving, with the kind of unconditional passion God has for us, is nowhere in our human DNA. Some of us learn to judge just to survive our situations and that is how we protect ourselves. I know. I am among the chief sinners

on this issue.

But “God so loved...”

How deep, how wide, how high, how long is the quality of that love described in those two little letters—so? We have been so loved and are called to love others as we have been loved.

In this season of lights may God illuminate our hearts to see clearly where we still hold ourselves back from His fiercely tender love, afraid we might drown in its depths. May God help us fall out of ourselves and into Him, that His love would be ever increasing through every aspect of our lives, for the sake of those who are lost and longing, and for His great glory!



Communion on the steps of **Zeppelin Field**,

the infamous site of Hitler's massive Nazi rallies

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Dear Friends

Since my return from the ministry for A Tour of Roses Michael and I have been praying for the Lord's direction. As a result, I will be leading another ministry trip in September under the banner of A Tour of Roses. This time we will focus more on Poland, especially Warsaw, Krakow, and Treblinka. In Warsaw and Krakow I am hoping to put together an outreach in the vicinity of where the Jewish ghettos were during WWII, along with a free concert in each place. In Treblinka I am hoping to obtain permission to hold a time of worship inside the former concentration camp area, as well as a free concert in the town nearby. We may also be doing an event or two in Nuremberg again. I will update you as plans begin to take shape.

At the beginning of 2010 we will inaugurate a special "missions kinship" at our house that will meet most Saturday nights at 7PM. It will be open to people involved in any mission project connected and/or originating with our church, The Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship. It will be a time of worship, word, and prayer. Our primary study focus for the Poland trip will be the Book of Philippians.

If you are interested in being a part of A Tour of Roses this year, here are 3 ways to participate:

1. Prayerfully consider joining the team. We are called to be “Christ’s Ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:16-21)—to express God’s unconditional love to the lost and the broken. Each person will have to cover their own expenses. Last year the trip costs for each person were approximately \$2200. If you are interested please email me at

sallykleinoconnor@sbcglobal.net

2. Commit to praying for the vision and planning of A Tour of Roses 2010, and for a specific person on the team. Please also continue to uphold our family in prayer as we pursue this calling. If you feel called to intercede for this project, please contact me at **sallykleinoconnor@sbcglobal.net**

3. Prayerfully consider if God would have you participate financially. Since A Tour of Roses is meant to be a gift to the German and Polish people, we will not be taking offerings or receiving honorariums, and we will not be selling CDs. A Tour of Roses, under the administration of Improbable People Ministries, relies on the gifts and contributions of those who feel led to participate through giving. All financial gifts to the ministry for A Tour of Roses or Improbable People Ministries directly are tax deductible. Michael and I have set aside a separate account under IPM just for all expenses involved for A Tour of Roses projects. Some of those expenses last year included: 1300 roses, 1500 CDs, fees for renting the Conference Center in Oswiecim and the Ballroom at Dachau Palace, sound equipment/lights, permits, posters, etc. All of this was made possible by God’s heart expressed through those who gave. All checks and financial gifts should be designated for A Tour of Roses specifically in the memo or in a note, otherwise they will be deposited into the general fund for IPM.

Finally, part of my mission this year will include sharing what I believe is God’s heart for Germany and Poland through A Tour of Roses. My hope is to have as many opportunities as possible to share this vision—especially with the Messianic Jewish Community. I believe Messianic Jews and Jewish believers in general, have a unique opportunity to be a “light” in a very dark place—to speak life where death reigned over our people. If you have any suggestions for opportunities to share with churches and congregations, please contact Michael at

improbablepeople@sbcglobal.net

May God give us courage to step into all He has put into our hearts this year. As Paul said “I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus has taken hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12)

—Sally Klein O'Connor

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