



# Reaching and Serving the Persecuted Church

## IN TOUCH MONTHLY

1 June 2007

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it” Jesus said, “but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel’s, shall save it.” Mark 8:35 For most of us today it’s not necessarily a matter of dying for the faith, but of setting loyalty to Jesus Christ above and before the comfortable way. How sad that many are not prepared for even the slightest inconvenience, not to mention sacrifice of time or treasure.

## Traveling, trusting and growing

### USA

ITMI Romanian partner, Dr. **Adrian Ban** and ITMI Director, **Steve Evers** spent most of March traveling around the US, speaking and sharing about the ministry that Adrian has along with his wife Ema, in Romania.



**Adrian Ban and Steve Evers.**

Adrian and Ema have a multifaceted ministry impacting families in Romania by equipping them for the challenges their ex-communist culture poses to glorifying God in family relationships. This equipping can take many forms. On Sundays, Adrian oversees the children’s ministry at his church, which is responsible for ministering to over 500 children. On weeknights, Adrian and Ema disciple young married couples in their Young Couples Fellowship groups. They also conduct 2 pre-marital weekend-long seminars a year.

Whenever he can, Adrian travels to train other pastors how to biblically minister to the marriages and families in

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their churches. This is all while trying to provide for his family by helping with **Integra**, a ministry that strives to improve Romanian business ethics for God!

While conversing with a dear Christian brother from Kansas on the topic of land, Adrian mentioned that he was hoping to purchase a small section of land to use as a marriage retreat for the couples he ministers to. Many of the couples live with their parents because they can’t afford to move out, though both spouses are employed. Most cannot afford to “get away” and have time to themselves either. A small retreat center would provide resources needed to build their marriages on solid foundations.

Early the next morning, that same dear brother called Steve and shared that He felt led to provide about 75% of the cost of purchasing that land! ITMI is still collecting funds for this endeavor in hopes that the deal will be closed very soon.

While Adrian was here he arranged, in faith, to return to the US for the **Children Desiring God Conference** in Minneapolis, MN with several of the Sunday School leaders he oversees at church. Thanks to your generosity, the Lord allowed ITMI to help Adrian with some of the travel expenses for the first trip. This allowed him to use some of his own funds to bring the teachers back. In addition, some generous supporters and friends of the Bans gave the additional funding for the second trip.



**Adrian Ban traveling in the US.**

Upon his return to Romania, Adrian immediately asked two of the Sunday School teachers to apply for visas to America. The applications (costing \$130 each) were submitted and sacrificially paid. The interviews were set for early one morning in Bucharest.

Because of the appointment *time*, they were forced to choose between

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# Martyrs in Malatya Turkey

April 18, 2007 – terror in the land of apricots

**Tilmann Geske** (46) was a German missionary serving Jesus Christ in Malatya, a city of 400,000, located in northeastern Turkey. On the morning of April 18, he kissed his wife **Susanne**, hugged his son, told them he loved them and set off through the narrow dusty streets to the Agaba Ismerkezi building and the small third-floor office they rented from Zirve Publishing House – an extension of a Protestant publisher in Istanbul.

At the same time, **Necati Aydin** (35), Pastor of the local Protestant church in Malatya, himself an adult convert from Islam and former Bible student at the Martin Bucer Seminary in Bonn, Germany, said goodbye to his wife, **Shemsa** and two children and left for the same office.

**Ugur Yuksel** (32), also an adult convert – single, but engaged to a Christian girl, made his way a little later to meet the other Brothers at the printing office on Ismetiye Mahallesi street.

A morning Bible study and prayer meeting had been scheduled. Some others, who had previously expressed interest in Christianity and were referred to as “seekers,” had also been invited. There were high expectations of introducing these men to their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Meanwhile across town, ten young men (all under 20) prepared to go to the same meeting, but with a dark and foreboding purpose. They were members of a *tarikats* or fraternity of ‘faithful believers’ in Islam. For months they had been preparing for this hour. Five of them had attended a ‘by invitation only’ service on Easter Sunday in a conference room at the Golden Apricot Hotel in downtown Malatya. By deliberate deceit they had meticulously gained the trust of their intended victims by posing as “seekers” interested in Christianity and wanting to know more about the Bible. What deception could be more powerful to Bible publishers?

On the morning of April 18, two of these men turned up for the Bible study which began around 10 a.m. Later the rest of the assassin arrived. Together they overpowered the three Christians, tied them to chairs and began their sadistic tortures. The killers demanded that they repeat the prayer to Allah, which they had printed out, but each man refused and declared, “Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.” So the long knives began to plunge. These martyred men are more than victorious conquerors because they lived the great principle of the Gospel, and did not consider life more important than loyalty to Christ.

The ritualistic and torturous manner of the murder (particularly the slicing of fingers) is straight out of the Qur’an: Sure 8:12 “I will strike terror into the hearts of Unbelievers. Flay their necks (with a sword) and strike every finger.” Some translations are more specific: The Rassoul and Zaidan translation says, “Chop off every

finger” while the Azhar translation says, “Chop off every finger tip.”

Later following an autopsy, Dr. Murat Ugras, a spokesman for the Turgut Ozal Medical Center, reported on Ugur’s death: “He had innumerable scores of knife stab wounds. It is obvious that these wounds had been inflicted to torture him. His fingers were repeatedly sliced to the bone lengthwise. His buttocks, his testicles, his rectum, his lower and middle back had dozens of cuts. There was a very long and open cut on his neck from ear to ear. His esophagus and trachea were cut with the knife-stab wounds.”

In April 2001, the MGK (National Security Council) began to consider Christians as a threat to national security, putting them in a category with al-Qaeda and the PKK (Kurdish) terrorists. Following the massacre, when Pastor Fikret Bocek went to the Security Directorate to give a statement he was ushered into the anti-Terrorist Department. There on the wall was a huge chart naming the local terrorist organizations. One prominent column listed all 8 evangelical Churches in Izmir!

As Pastor Bocek noted, “[If] the intention was to frighten the Christians, those ‘people’ did not know the opposite reaction would happen. They did not know that the Church would be mobilized to call on God. They did not know that we would not back down, but would be fueled beyond explanation to preach the Gospel more boldly.” These Brothers did not die in vain. Their blood nurtures the “seed of the Church” and advances the Gospel just as Tertullian observed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

Tilmann’s widow, Susanne Geske, earned much admiration for her words on a TV interview the day after the massacre. She forgave the murderers of her husband, the way Christ forgave His murderers, by quoting His prayer, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” One journalist wrote, “She said in one sentence what 1000 missionaries in 1000 years could never do.”

Ironically this tragic event may have a secular side-effect by preventing (or at least delaying) the spread of Islam in Europe. The EU will need to reconsider whether or not it wants to add an additional 70 million Turkish Muslims to its regional hodge-podge.

This gruesome atrocity, deliberately performed in the name of a ‘religion,’ will long be remembered. It is in the same savage and uncivilized category as the murder of five American missionaries by Auca Indians in Ecuador in January 1956, about which many books have been written. The sterling testimony of the Martyr’s wives has set the standard to which all Christians must aspire. We must not only match with forgiveness, but exceed with Christian love the level of hatred expressed in the brutal murders of our Brothers in Christ. Truly, “...love covers a multitude of sin.” **1 Peter 4:8**

**“Christian love must exceed the level of hatred expressed in the brutal murders.”**

Dear Team,

When considering details of the recent barbaric slaughter of three Christian men in Turkey, one can only conclude that the evil deed was initiated by Satan himself, the "accuser of the Brethren." But the final victory belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, whose martyrs sealed their testimony with their blood, and "overcame him [the Accuser] by the blood of the Lamb." **Revelation 12:11**

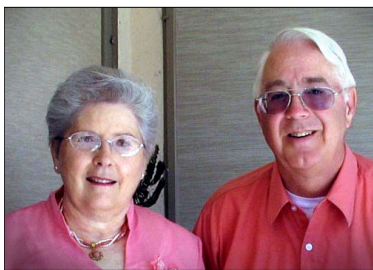
ITMI's **Moreson Children's Haven** in Malmesbury, near Cape Town, is in urgent need of a new roof on a strategic part of the house. Estimated cost is \$5,000. Half of this has already been pledged by a Christian neighbor. An early winter storm hit last week with high wind and horizontal rain, flooding one of the rooms.



(L to R) Tilmann Geske, Ugur Yuksel, and Necati Aydin.

Rev. **Jon Jere**, Director of **Samaritan Children's Home** in Zambia, will be on a 6-week itinerary in the USA, August 16 to October 1. If you'd like to have him in your Church or for a home meeting, please contact our office toll-free at 888-918-4100.

The **Lusaka Bible College** in Zambia continues to grow. The new term began last week. ITMI helped them secure a new computer and other equipment. Some more books are on the way (by ship) and they are looking to expand by purchasing adjacent land as the Lord provides.



Ron and Jane Dissly.

Remember **Ron and Jane Dissly**, the senior couple that moved up from success to significance as they served the Lord for over 5 years in Poland? Now they're at it again – this time in Uganda. After adjusting culturally to their new environment, they quickly settled into ministry at ITMI's **International School of Missions** in Kampala. Ron, a former Texaco accountant for 20+ years, is helping Pastor **Muhindo Kawede**, Director of ISM, with the principles of accounting. In addition he has taught courses in Pastoral Care, Biblical Counseling and together with Jane a course on Christian Marriage. Jane has been busy in women's seminars and teaching music. They rejoice as they see the joy of Jesus manifest in Ugandan hearts. Pray for them this month as they speak at a Pastor's Conference of approximately 20 churches.

**Frontline Fellowship USA** is now incorporated in America and can receive and receipt funds. Gifts for the ministry of Dr. **Peter Hammond** should be sent to:

Frontline Fellowship USA, 1177 Branham Lane PMB 413, San Jose, CA 95118.

On a personal note our grandson, Pfc. **Vincent Lemke** graduated in the top 5 of his class last month from Marine Corp basic training in California, and is now a full-fledged U.S. Marine. Congratulations Vince! May God bless you and keep you safe.



Vincent Lemke.

Yours in His grip,

Bill Bathman

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making the seven hour drive overnight or paying for a hotel in Bucharest out of their thin pockets. After all of their time, effort and sacrifices, they were flatly denied visas by our American Embassy personnel.

When Steve found out, he employed ITMI's resources to help obtain the visas. He phoned Congressman Trent Franks and explained the situation. Trent was very understanding and his extremely capable staff helped us vouch for the validity of the Romanian teachers. Meanwhile, Adrian had convinced three others to apply. The letters of verification from Congressman Franks arrived just in time for the visa interviews.

The end result was a trip for five, Adrian and four Sunday School teachers, to attend the conference. The five were impressed with what they saw of Bethlehem Baptist Church and its dedicated children's ministry teachers. After the trip one of the Romanian teachers shared, "I was amazed by the patience expressed by the Sunday School teachers at Bethlehem Baptist Church in working with the kids. There's much to be learned!" Another said, "I realized how much broader the kingdom of God is and how we can learn from other brothers and sisters in Christ."

***"I am so thankful for this experience - it will make a long lasting impact in the way I will carry on the ministry from now on."***

***-A Romanian Sunday School teacher-***

The group left with fresh ideas and strategies for impacting their own Sunday School classes. They also began to understand the opportunity they have each Sunday to make a major impact on the future of Romania. For example, one of them said, "I realized one more time the power of the Word of God being memorized and taught well to children."

Overall, the group was grateful for the opportunity to be equipped for more effective ministry. One of them said, "I am so thankful for this experience; it will make a long lasting impact in the way I will carry on the ministry from now on."

Adrian shared that now they are focusing on adapting the material they received to fit their own unique Romanian context. He hopes to translate the material into Romanian so that it can be implemented in other churches as well.

Adrian added, "I want to thank everybody who was involved and made this possible for us – the ITMI family, Cornerstone Foundation, *Children Desiring God* and many other people of God from the US and Romania. All the glory be given to Jesus."

It will be, and it would not have happened without the generosity of you, God's people.

Compiled and written by Summer Kelley

**Occasionally, ITMI has information from the field we'd like to share with you before In Touch Monthly comes out, such as:**

- **Breaking News**
- **Partners' prayer needs**
- **Updates and stories**

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Please send your email address to:  
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or  
**mark the enclosed form.**

**Privacy Policy: ITMI will not, for ANY reason, give your email address to any other person or entity.**

## **For Praise . . .**

1. Mr. & Mrs. Timothy **Keller** arrived safely back in Cape Town!
2. The **Hammond** family has completed a very successful 5-week US itinerary.
3. **Steve Evers** had many blessings & opportunities in Romania & Poland last month.
4. **Bill & Harriett** survived a SA winter (no central heating) due back in US by end of this month.

## **For Prayer . . .**

1. Moreson Children's Haven urgently needs now roof. It's winter in Cape Town!
2. **Kelly** and **Cherise Smith** live in a very remote area and need to replace their 4x4.
3. Follow-up treatment for **Bill's** eye surgery last month.
4. Families of the martyred men and fellow believers in Turkey.



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