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*Dear Friends,*

**TT - Travelling Together' (54)**

**December 2013**

The message of the Gospel has once again taken on a special significance in the face of total hopelessness and deep despair! In the space of a few days two relatively young people have taken their own lives and we were called to help their loved ones. Their unimaginable depths of sadness were enough to make us speechless and yet, even as we counselled the mourners, we felt that there was a glimmer of hope... A few days later we were able to tell the crowd gathered at the graveside, "In spite of sadness and fear, in spite of pain and despair, in spite of illness and hopelessness, in spite of denial and guilt, in spite of bitterness and resignation, **no one can extinguish the LIGHT of heaven! The LIGHT of hope and comfort, the LIGHT of love and confidence, the LIGHT of reconciliation and trust, the LIGHT of joy and happiness, the LIGHT from heaven, the LIGHT of God**" (B. Matzel)

**The Lord Jesus Christ says, "I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness!" (Jn 12:46)**

**Many many miles...**

It must have been a long time since we travelled so many thousands of miles in the space of one month, as we did in November... We went to the Swabian church holiday by **Lake Constance**, a six-hour train journey to the ladies' breakfast meeting in **Bad Gaisern**, to **Bad Aussee** for the annual meeting of the BEG delegates, to **Feldkirch in Vorarlberg** on the border with Liechtenstein for a workshop on 'Funerals and Supporting the Bereaved', preaching and an interview with Esther who wishes to go to Peru on a short-term placement... We were aware of God's blessing and experienced HIS safekeeping!

**Again we were TRAVELLING TOGETHER with you. We are so GRATEFUL to all of you.**

**Advent and Christmas at the FORUM**

To all of you who remembered our Advent Celebration in prayer, we THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts! Our fellow workers went to great lengths to put together a lovely programme especially for the children, but also including contributions in song and a message from the Word of God. A good number of people with no church connection came along, including three members of staff from the 'Burgenland Women's Refuge' to whom Hans-Georg officially handed over the cheque for the proceeds of the Gospel Concert, over €2,000. Afterwards we had a buffet and served fruit punch. The theme of the evening was '**The Greatest Gift Ever**' and it sparked a number of good conversations afterwards that went on late into the evening... **We've attached some photos of our Advent Celebration...** The next time FORUM event will be at the Eisenstadt Christmas Market during the afternoon of 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. (1.00pm - 9.00pm). We have rented the 'charity hut' and we wish to give out Gospel calendars and have Christian books and gifts on sale and offer hot punch and biscuits.

We are also busy planning our family service for Christmas Eve.

Here in Eisenstadt we are taking part in the Austria-wide '**Hope and Joy**' Christmas parcel scheme. This year the parcels are destined for Serbia. We would like this scheme to have a bigger effect in this country than ever before.

**Over New Year...**

Together with Manuel, Hans-Georg is looking forward to taking part in the **Europe-wide Missionary Congress 'mission-net'** ([www.mission-net.org](http://www.mission-net.org)), being held this time in D-Offenburg (southern Germany). About 3,000 participants are expected. Our partner mission SIM ([www.sim.org](http://www.sim.org)) has a stand there and we will be helping them.

**Future plans or just a dream?**

We are thinking that there will be a time soon when, God willing, all our children will have 'flown the nest' and we as parents and grandparents will be free to move on. **We still have no idea** if and where...! We are open to be part of '**Finishers**' (e.g. <http://finishers.org>), not just publicising it! We have been recently inspired when we heard about friends who have made a fresh start. When we were out in PNG, this family were working in the Horn of Africa. They then took up service in a pastorate in their own homeland, to accommodate the education of their children. Now as a couple they are taking the bold step of setting off again, after 17 years, to work in a country in Africa which is in crisis! Does the Lord have something similar in store for us? Are these future plans or just a dream? **For the moment we are working wholeheartedly here, and still enjoying it!**

**Family news**

Recently our eldest **grandchild TIMO** (6) came to us for a sleepover! We enjoyed this time together very much.

**The Dedication of SAMUEL** - our youngest grandchild - will be on 15<sup>th</sup> December in Benjamin and Maria's church in Baden (near Vienna). Afterwards the whole family will have lunch together.

**SEBASTIAN and ANNIE** are moving this month into a nicely converted old railway building in a town near Eisenstadt.

**ANNIKA** is finding her nursery teacher training very challenging, in particular the teaching practice sessions at the nursery school need a lot of preparation and strength...

**Many THANKS for your prayers and your gifts! Together with you, we are building God's church - worldwide!**

Our warmest greetings to you and may God bless you during these last few weeks of the year!

It is such a special time for looking ahead - Advent, Christmas and whatever the New Year will bring...

How good it is that we can expect that God wants to meet us particularly at this time!

We really want to be ready for this - may it be the same for you all!

With our best wishes,

*Hans-Georg, Margret & Annika Hoprich*