

Aaron and Annegret Bowes “And you shall be witnesses to Me...” in Germany

January 2024

Dear Praying Friends,

No more breakfasts at the Mission, no more stops at the drop-in-center, no more visits to our Sunday Fellowship - in the month of December it was sad to hear that our friend Helmut passed away at the age of 71. Towards the end of his life he was in pretty bad shape, with Parkinsons, he had oxygen tubes and then he got Covid too. One year ago in January he was baptized and clearly professed his faith in Jesus Christ, we have a nice video of his baptism. He came regularly to our Sunday meeting. The Bible says that “all have sinned” and humanly speaking, Helmut’s list was probably a little longer than most. He did several prison terms (nothing to be proud of), but we do trust in the promises of God, “and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” 1 John 1:7. So we hope to see Helmut in heaven one day. And his story is an encouragement for us to continue our witness in this East German city of Halle.

In this regard we would like to share some more testimonies.

Bibles for Halle: I volunteer once a week at the Train Station Mission. It is a good way to meet people and of course share the love of God and help the team in serving the poor. The Mission mainly has a food program for the needy. Not all who serve there are Christians. Recently I did an afternoon shift with an older lady, new to the Mission. She told me she grew up in socialist East Germany and does not believe in God and has no church ties. But then in our break time she started a conversation and basically asked me every possible question you can think of about the Christian faith. Also, she was very anxious to take one of our free Bibles. Please pray for my colleague at the Mission to understand the message of the Bible and be saved. Each week I lay out a Bible at the Mission, we have a book shelf near the entrance. Often a guest will take a free Bible. (Actually a N.T., a nice large sized version, a good translation and easy to read for people with little or no church background – so they can jump right in and start reading.) Our guests also like the free testimony books with conversion stories. Thank you so much for all who sent in donations for literature.

Looking back on Christmas in Halle:

Our east German city of Halle (pop. 240,000) is over 80% non-religious. So our main focus is on evangelism through ministry partnerships. Christmas provided lots of opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Anne volunteers once a week at a Christian family center and teaches German to refugee ladies, who are trying to get established in this country. Most of them have a Muslim background but some are from eastern Europe too. Because it is just ladies in the group, they really open up and have fun together learning German. In December they took up the Christmas story from Luke chapter 2 as part of learning the language and culture here. It was so encouraging that most of the Muslim ladies even asked for a copy of Luke 2 in German and Arabic to take home with them. So these were good opportunities to share about the real meaning of Christmas.

Friday afternoon Kids’ Club: There is usually a good turnout to the Kids’ Club, sometimes up to 25 children attend. This is held right in our apartment block neighborhood and Anne serves as part of the team. This year the children practiced very hard to prepare a Christmas program including a choir song (Jesus came for you) and also a play using masks to share the Christmas story. It was surprising how many parents came out for this Christmas program, both German and Muslim parents. The room was quite full and they all loved to see their kids in action. Please pray for the weekly Kids’ Club. Over the years some of the children have come to personal faith in Jesus and later been baptized. P.T.L.

Soup Kitchen Fellowship: Someone had donated “Wildschwein” (wild boar meat) for our Christmas dinner. So members on our team worked very hard at making a delicious stew out of it, and also preparing potato dumplings, red cabbage and deserts (a traditional German dinner). We had about 60 people attend, including some new family members of our guests from the apartment blocks. Everyone seemed to have a

good time and many were quite thankful not to be alone at Christmas. Our team member Angelika even motivated some of our guests from the Soup Kitchen to prepare a Christmas play. And of course this went over very well, even though some of the “actors” did forget a few lines! And for the sermon we always need to use lots of practical illustrations to keep people’s attention. So in the message I shared about our need for JESUS through the “the crib, the cross and the crown”.

As you can see, we have lots of opportunities to share the good news through our ministry partnerships. Our biggest **prayer request** is that people here will understand the gospel and see their own personal need for the Savior-God, Jesus Christ.

Big Changes: Starting in this New Year we decided to move our Sunday afternoon Fellowship to a new location. The Soup Kitchen was starting to get very crowded and unsettling. At the end it was difficult for us to work with the people and hold a meeting in a restless atmosphere. Then we were offered the use of the rooms on Sundays at the after-school care facility (where the Kids’ Club is held). It is also located in our apartment block neighborhood. This is a larger facility with a good kitchen, so that we can keep up our same program. We were a little uncertain how this would go over. But on our first Sunday in January we had a good turnout of around 50 people (picture below). Almost everyone from the Soup Kitchen showed up and also two tables were quite full with friends from the Train Station Mission. So this was very encouraging. Admittedly some do just come for the free meal, which is part of our program. But all are welcome and we keep praying for everyone that attends. We even got our Bus ministry fired up again. We had shared about this on our recent furlough. The facility where we meet allows us to use their 9-seater van as long as we put some diesel in the tank! On our first Sunday I took 8 people home after the meeting, they all live in these apartment blocks. We have a lot of older folks that attend, some come with a cane or a walker and they need a ride home afterwards. Some of these seniors are really up in age and have lived their life without God. They do need Jesus as their Savior, so we are very thankful that they like to come to our gospel meeting and fellowship dinner.



Family news: Everyone was here for Christmas (but at different times, due to a few bouts of Covid in the family), except for Philip who stayed in England, where he lives and works. He spent Christmas with Laura’s family. After that Philip and Laura took a short term missions trip to Moldova and had some good experiences and blessings there.

Thank you for standing with us in prayers and support. What a mighty God we serve! – and together we give Him all the praise. We wish you a happy and blessed New Year 2024.

Aaron and Anne Bowes

Serving with:
Grace Global Ministries
P.O. Box 12
Cedarville OH 45314

Aaron and Annegret Bowes
Walter-Gropius-Weg2
06124 Halle/Saale
Germany
Tel. 011-49-345-77402597
Bowes6@aol.com

Canadian donations:
missions3Dthreshold
1977 Snow Valley Road
Minesing, ON L9X 0H3