

JUL-SEP | 2020

# vienna team

Newsletter of the Vienna Team

## PRAYER REQUESTS

Please keep the following in your prayers:

- Thank God for a positive interview for Sara's asylum!
- Continued prayers for her as she finds an apartment and begins the job training process
- For Mahdi's asylum interview in December
- That Afsaneh will receive her interviews at last
- For the increase in COVID cases across the country
- The faith walk/discipleship of new Christians
- For the success of new and existing outreach programs, including new opportunities through Kreuzung Connect and U!Shine
- For one of our friend's marital problems
- For the new visitors to the various house groups
- For the health problems of our various members

## *Update on COVID-19 Situation in Vienna During the Summer*

**BY WILL**

We were fortunate that Austria took a fairly hardline approach to the pandemic early on. As mentioned in our last newsletter, early regulations and citizens willing to go along with restrictions and mask mandates made for a quick decrease in the virus, and by June and July, the numbers had dropped to very low amounts (less than 100 new cases a day across the whole country.) This allowed the country to mostly open up again throughout the summer months. Restaurants and cafes were open (with seating restrictions), events like concerts and festivals took place (with some changes), and generally, things felt almost back to normal.

This made our jobs much easier. We were able to meet with people again freely, have group events, meet as a church outside on our Fellowship Sundays and as small groups in our homes on other days, and continue with Teen Camp with some minor adjustments. Travel outside the country was still mostly restricted, but movement within Austria was allowed (and encouraged), so both families were able to spend some time in the mountains in beautiful, new areas of the country.

Unfortunately, as I'm writing this in early October, cases have once again climbed exponentially upward, on the same level with the spring. We're looking at the return of restrictions, so please pray that our work can continue at the same level as before.





## *Teen Camp 2020*

**BY JAKE**

As this year's teen camp approached we were all filled with apprehension if we would be able to have it or not. Praise the Lord the country of Austria reacted quickly and decisively to the pandemic, closing the borders, shutting the country down and soon requiring masks and social distancing. The result is that the country could begin to ease some of those restrictions enough in summer so that camps could be held.

To say that the teens were excited to be up in the mountains and away from the worries of the pandemic is an understatement. We had little to no complaints about the extra regulations or rules and everyone was well behaved. Regular hand-washing and disinfecting became a part of normal camp activities and we hardly had to tell them twice. We really had a great group of teens and had so many that we needed to have a couple older ones step up and help us with the small groups. Three teens of exceptional maturity and camp experience willing lead the discussion time and served as leaders at various duty stations. We are so impressed with the way they handled the discussion we may never need to have adult helpers again, kidding.

This year's theme was also a bit different. Given the state of the world and the age of the teens, we decided to look beyond the New Testament and tackle the book of Ecclesiastes. We wrestled through that piece of wisdom literature and the paradoxes and shortness of life it so eloquently (sarcasm) brings to our reality. But hopefully in the prime of their life, our teens will learn to use the brevity of life to make better decisions, slow down and enjoy the moments, and not be shocked or surprised by 'Hebel' but prepared with tools to help them through.

Of course the most exciting news of all was that Sara, a teen from Graz that has been coming to camp for years starting with kids camp, was baptized two weeks later. Praise God!!!



*Land hockey tournament*





## Kreuzung Connect Update

BY AMANDA

Summer means picnics and barbeques and spending time with friends. That's exactly what Kreuzung: Connect aimed to do, as well. We were able to host a few events, while still practicing social distancing and other precautions set forth by the Austrian government. Taking advantage of the warm weather and long, sunny days, most of those events took place outside. We hosted a bring your own picnic at a park, which included tossing around a baseball and an American football, emblazoned with the Denver Broncos mascot, of course. And offered other opportunities for meeting up to do walks, or short hikes. Unfortunately, a couple of these were rained out or forced to be moved inside to cafes. Still, who ever complained about enjoying a cup of coffee in a Viennese coffeehouse?



*Socially-distanced  
hike*

My favorite event was a bbq we hosted at our house. Original plans called for hanging out in our backyard chatting and playing games while Jake performed his magic at the grill. Though rain was forecast we were holding out hope it would pass us by. Sadly, it didn't. We had to close down registration, limiting the number of people who could come because we moved the party inside. Still, all things considered, we had a great turnout with folks from Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Egypt and the Philippines. Everyone brought along side dishes and desserts and Jake still performed magic at the grill, although under an umbrella. Even though our hope for a warm, sunny afternoon and evening turned into a gray, wet and cold one, everyone had a great time.

Beyond the meetups and events, one of the most exciting things to happen over the summer months was to see interest and sign ups grow by leaps and bounds. We were, and continue, to receive requests each week from people looking for information about and to join Connect. We're finding that people are craving and seeking out ways to meet new people and a sense of community. Though, new government restrictions related to COVID-19 will make in-person meet ups during the fall and winter a challenge, we are brainstorming new ideas and possibilities all the time.





## ***U!Shine Through The Summer***

**BY HOLLY**

It is hard to describe the role U!Shine Vienna played this summer because, from an outside point of view, not a lot happened. With Vienna being shut down for the entire spring, it was a challenge to know what to offer to people and how – wanting to keep everyone safe while also answering the call for mental health discussion. Vienna, like most everyone else around the world, was (and continues to be) in a state of anxiety and depression, significantly affecting singles, women, and parents. As living beings, we are not designed for isolation, but rather, for community, a comfort with which U!Shine Vienna wanted to provide the city to help relieve people of their stresses.

So, we tried a few things. First, we created an office within the walls of a renowned Viennese institution called WUK, an organization that supports small nonprofits that aim to improve the surrounding community. There, we were able to begin holding office hours for planning, writing content, interviewing volunteers, and hosting mentorship sessions. Second, we invited the community to join us for several easy hikes. This way, we could connect from a socially safe distance and remain outside. The hikes seemed to brighten people's spirits, grateful

And third, we regularly provided our viewers with tips on how to deal with the mental and emotional impact of COVID-19, a service we continue to provide nearly every day. For the foreseeable future, U!Shine Vienna will continue to host virtual-only events and services, but we remain hopeful that, sometime next year, we can reunite, in person, once again.



*WUK Center, new home of U!Shine*



# *Pictures from the Field*



*Fellowship Sunday lunch in August*



*Sara M. being baptized at the church in Graz*



*Abby at teen camp*



*On the U-Bahn following Sara's positive asylum case*



*Empty Belvedere Garden*



*Bobby with some of the teens on a hike at youth camp*

## *The Vienna Team*

### *The Haskews*

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### *The Koois*

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