

IMMIGRANT EUROPE

Greater Europe Mission Retools to Reach Them



HENRY DENEEN

Henry L. Deneen has served as President of Greater Europe Mission since September 1, 2007. Henry has experience as a trial attorney, Municipal Judge, and Chief Legal Counsel for Governor David M. Beasley, South Carolina. In more recent years, he lived with his wife and four children in France to focus more intently on a closed country in North Africa as a strategy leader. He is now based in Colorado Springs. Go to www.gemission.org to learn more about their new emphasis on Discipleship Multiplication Training and how you can be involved.

As I watch the landscape of Europe and see the economic, political, social, and religious upheaval all across that great continent, I am reminded of God's promise in John 16:33: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Europe is experiencing a "perfect storm" of negativity, defeat, destruction, and seemingly, a total disregard for the things of God. What better place can a follower of Christ invest his or her life than in the midst of this chaos? We see churches becoming museums, rock-climbing businesses, and restaurants. We see the peoples of Europe losing faith in authority and institutions and feeling overwhelmed by the incredible numbers of immigrants streaming into Europe from all across the globe. We see economies collapsing.

Walking the streets of London two years ago I observed the highly-energetic, focused, driven people in the arts, media, business, and politics, and realized that it is going to take specially-trained and gifted people who believe in the urgent message of the gospel, to help transform the spiritual landscape of Europe and see peoples and nations turned upside-down by the principles of God's Kingdom. Calling people to this urgent task of reaching Europe with the gospel and helping them realize that as we reach Europe with the gospel, we are truly reaching the nations, have become the strategic and personal objectives for me as well as for Greater Europe Mission (GEM). We know as did Esther that we have been called "for such a time as this," and we began several years ago to position ourselves to respond in the quickest and most effective ways possible.

Luke 1:37, on display on the wall in my office, reminds us every day that "... nothing is impossible with God." This reality began to permeate our thinking and guide our decisions, strategies, priorities, and prayers four years ago. "Immediate, radical obedience" became a guiding principle for us, and we know that only this type of God-inspired obedience is pleasing to Him. We began to pray and believe, as a mission family, that the incredible movements of God seen in the 10/40 Window and in great nations such as China, India, and Bangladesh can indeed take place among the nations of Europe. For us, a large part of the battle was believing that God was at work in Europe and that extraordinary Kingdom advances could and would take place there. My personal prayers each day include asking God for people who are humble learners and who are willing to do whatever it takes to see the gospel spread rapidly across Europe and to the nations.

It became clear that radical new strategies were required. Many nations are in one location. God has brought them to us, and sent us to them. We will not look past them. Because of these realities we quickly refined and sharpened our *Vision* and *Mission* to focus on the rapid reproduction of disciples and churches in Europe. Our leadership teams felt that current models/methodologies would take far too long to impact all of Europe with the

gospel, much less the nations beyond Europe. We knew that our leadership structure needed to be flattened; our leaders needed to be fully empowered; our Vision/Mission needed to be singularly focused; all in our Mission family should be constantly updating our skills, both professional and personal, in light of the task before us; and that we needed to work closely with churches to develop church-based teams as a necessary element in seeing all peoples of Europe reached for Christ. We also knew, most importantly, that prayer had to occupy the premier place in all of our plans. Meeting for prayer, fasting and praying on the first Monday of each month, establishing our prayer website (www.pray4gem.com), and seeking to practice the presence of God each day have been vital for our growth as followers of Christ, as well as in seeing much progress toward achieving our Vision/Mission.

Prayer led us to the realization that Europe is not only strategically positioned to impact the world through economics and politics, but is a new home for peoples coming from all nations. Standing in the Frankfurt airport, for example, and seeing flights to and from many nations affirmed my belief that as we reach Europe with the gospel, the nations will be reached as well. We have learned that 80% of all immigrants entering the European Union come through Athens, Greece, making it a very strategic portal with global reach. Immigrants who have come to faith in cities across Europe are immediately sharing their faith with those from their home countries and others who are similarly-situated. They are clustering together for a sense of community and belonging in countries that are not their own. This enables us to reach segments of populations, such as Iraqis, Afghans, and Indonesians, in clearly-identified areas. We also came to realize, through prayer, the vital role that cities play in the lives of those in Europe and beyond. We are discovering the diversity of peoples and occupations in the great cities of Europe, as well as the many domains that exist: government, economics, science, church, family, education, communication arts, and entertainment. We began to call workers, based on their giftings and life experience, to move to a city and seek to influence one or more of these domains. Only as we saturate these domains with the gospel will all peoples be exposed to the truths of Jesus and have an opportunity to respond.

We are asking God for catalytic leaders, people who can build a team around themselves and catalyze Discipleship- and Church-Planting Movements in the cities of Europe. In June, 2010, our Board voted to allow non-North Americans

to join our Mission family, which was a much-needed strategic step forward. We began to pray for, search for, and find catalytic leaders from outside North America and the results have been incredibly positive. The Englishman leading our UK initiatives mobilized 361 people from many different churches and organizations to work in London during the Olympics this summer, and is working to catalyze rapid Discipleship- and Church-Planting Movements throughout the U.K. A businessman from Texas has moved to a port city to work among immigrants and is building his team. One hundred fifty volunteers joined him this summer, and they saw 41 immigrants give their lives to Christ, 15 of whom were baptized in the Sea! We celebrated with our first-ever team from Malawi, Nigeria, and South Africa, as they led 17 to Christ in London! These leaders are calling others to the tasks of reaching these great cities for Christ and are showing a God-inspired ability to take risks, mobilize effectively, pilot, learn, and partner with many in Europe. Catalytic leaders are a major thrust of our vision to see Discipleship- and Church-Planting Movements in 50 major cities in Europe and North Africa over the next five years. In November, I'll be joining a group of businessmen and pastors from Iowa who are committing to catalyze work in Barcelona. In October, I met with a church outside New York City that

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has committed to catalyze work in two Balkan countries. God is leading churches and teams to focus on strategic cities and engage as a church family with prayer, people, strategies, and resources.

One of the major training and mobilization tools we are using is DMT (Discipleship Multiplication Training). So far this year, we have held training events in Dublin, Ireland; Houston; Denver; Kiev, Ukraine; and Prague, Czech. We thank our colleagues Steve Smith and Ying Kai for leading this training and pointing so many toward biblical reproduction principles. (Pick up their book, *T4T: A Discipleship Re-Revolution*. See the inside back cover of this issue for more details.) Many GEM workers, church

partners, and national believers are responding, and the results have been amazing. One French pastor who attended the Dublin training said with tears in his eyes that he would love to see rapid reproduction become a reality in his community. Coaching and accountability follows the training for all attendees. We are seeing churches and individuals catch the vision and then respond by praying and going. This is taking place, we believe, because of the focus on prayer, major cities, catalyzing Discipleship- and Church-Planting Movements, high-energy training, and, most of all, the movement of God's Spirit. We are seeing GEM's highest number of appointees ever; hundreds coming to Christ across Europe and being baptized; and churches being planted and some reproducing, rapidly, to the fourth generation. Our GEM family has instituted monthly accountability which helps us encourage and come alongside each other. We also instituted quarterly metrics in 2011 which have been a great blessing for our GEM family, our prayer partners, financial investors, and those who have a heart for Europe. These are indeed thrilling days. The power of God's Holy Spirit is blowing across Europe, and His presence is clearly evident in the lives of many whose hearts have been given to Him.

These steps have not been pain-free. Change can be difficult and stressful for people and an organization, and we have not been an exception. We began to implement our new Vision/Mission in the Spring of 2008, just before the financial crisis hit. Some believe there is an implication that the new directions diminish the value of their ministry. Nothing could be further from the truth, but communicating that reality has been difficult. We have learned that constant communication at all levels of leadership is mandatory, and trying to engender discussion rather than mandates

has been our goal. Some feel that we are moving away from GEM's historical roots of seminary training. Our founder, Bob Evans, started GEM with a view toward training and equipping Europeans to plant churches and advance the cause of Christ throughout Europe. This vision is the same for us today. Some believe that leadership is saying that there is only one method of reaching people for Christ and fulfilling our Vision/Mission. While we have sought to embrace multiple methodologies and partnerships, this belief persists. We are working hard to help our GEM family work through this corporate and personal pain.

As we look back on these four years of transition, we have learned a great deal that can be commended to others who are seeking to implement change with a vision for the future. As we are people of courage we can lean hard on God's promises and hold on to the vision He has given us. As we are growing personally and spiritually we will love people and let them know it, take chances on people, and not settle for mediocrity. We must always encourage and be open to giving and receiving feedback from colleagues throughout our organizations. We must always look to the future and most importantly live and lead with a sense of urgency about the advancement of God's Kingdom. We must constantly retool in light of what Europe's immigrant future demands and engage in radical obedience by leaning into God's promises. The kingdom of darkness is alive and well, but cannot stand before God's people and the power of His strong right hand.

80% OF ALL IMMIGRANTS ENTERING EUROPE COME THROUGH ATHENS, GREECE, MAKING IT A VERY STRATEGIC CITY WITH GLOBAL REACH.



Perhaps in reading this article you feel a sense that God is calling you to something bigger than what you are engaged in today. As I stood on a beach in Tunisia in 2000, where St. Augustine used to preach, I was convicted by God that, for the first time in my life, as I considered working among Muslims in North Africa, I was being called to a task that only He could accomplish. This did not depend on me, my life experiences, or my gifting. For the work to be done, God had to do it. That's exactly where all of us should want to be as we consider this incredible adventure of following God's plan for our lives. May we honor Him by taking leaps of faith and seeing God direct and move as only He can. 