



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**  
**Thursday Evening: Session 1**  
**“Why We Are Here”**  
**Sarah Robins (6 min.)**

Good evening, and welcome to the 2022 Greater Europe Mission Vision Summit.

My name is Sarah Robins, and I have the privilege of serving as the Vice President of Growth for Greater Europe Mission.

I want to welcome you to Half Moon Bay! Hopefully, you’ve had a chance to look out across the Pacific Ocean and take in God’s amazing creation. This is certainly a beautiful and historic place. The El Camino Real runs through here. It’s an old route that connects 21 Spanish missions. And we’re close to San Francisco, a city rich in diversity much like Europe is today. Take time this weekend and soak in the sunshine and the rich heritage of this area.

We’re excited to be with you all for what is going to be a great time of fun, fellowship, and an opportunity for you to take part in a great mission.

Actually, we believe there is no greater mission than reaching Europe with the Gospel. And there is no greater moment for that mission than right now. But I’ll let our other speakers unpack that for you more later on.

As I said, you’re here to kick back and enjoy yourself. We’ve got some great speakers and entertainment lined up for you.

You've been invited here because we want you to understand the vision of what GEM is planning in Europe in the coming months and years. And because we want you to be a part of it.

On Saturday, but not until then, we'll give you an opportunity to be a part of the work God is doing through GEM in Europe. Work like helping care for Ukrainian refugees, planting churches in cities like Frankfurt or Athens, and equipping volunteers to share the Gospel throughout Europe.

I do want you to know that in no way is your being here contingent upon your giving. It is simply our honor to minister to you this weekend.

That's why *you're* here. If I may, can I share with you why *I'm* here?

I'm the VP of Growth for GEM. My familiarity with the organization began several years ago during a vision trip with my church. We traveled to Athens and Frankfurt, among other places. I experienced first-hand some of the fantastic work GEM was doing with discipleship and church planting. While I was in Frankfurt, I met Jon. He rang me two weeks later and asked me to join the board. I said, "I'd rather you ask me to come work for you." He said, "We'll get to that eventually. Let's start with the board."

Growing up, I went on several international mission trips, it was a part of my family's ethos. We would do prayer and evangelism events and see people come to Christ, but there was no real follow-up. There was no relational component. There was no real discipleship.

I discovered that wasn't the case with GEM.

GEM's focus is discipleship through relationships. At the heart of GEM is evangelism and discipleship. That's what compelled me to join them. I have a heart for people who are hardest to reach — and that's what Europe is. And that's who GEM wants to see changed by the Gospel.

Only a small percentage of Europeans identify as Christians. We believe Europe is the most overlooked mission field in the world. Since World War II, the number of professing believers has steadily declined. A lot of Americans don't know that. There's this perception that Europe is a religious region when, in fact, they've become quite the opposite.

Europe is home to nearly 2,000 different people groups. By the middle of 2021, there were 26.6 million refugees and 48 million displaced persons. Those numbers don't even include the millions displaced because of the war in Ukraine. What this means is that Europe is a fertile region for evangelism and discipleship to take place.

The opportunity for Greater Europe Mission to reach these millions of people is tremendous! It is an exciting time to be a part of what God is doing through GEM all across Europe.

This weekend, you'll hear stories of that incredible work from places such as Moldova, Germany, and Kosovo, among others. We pray that our impact in Europe will spread across the globe.

The Apostle Paul writes this in 1 Thessalonians 2:8: *So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

I'm convinced that during this weekend, the people of Europe will become very dear to you as well, just as they were to the Apostle Paul. His mission is now our mission, and we are passionate about seeing the people of Europe transformed by the Gospel.

Again...welcome. We hope this weekend is enriching and relaxing. We trust it will be refreshing and inspirational to your soul.

And now I'd like to welcome two courageous leaders of this mission to the stage: Rob Bugh and Jon Burns.



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**Thursday Evening: Session 1**  
**President's Story**  
**Rob Bugh and Jon Burns (13 min.)**

**ROB:** Good evening.

My name is Rob Bugh, and I have the privilege of serving as the chairman of the board for Greater Europe Mission. I've served in this role for about 15 years. I was a church pastor for 30 years, and once I retired, Jon Burns haggled me to come on as a consultant for GEM.

I'll be talking with Jon here in a minute, about his story and how he came to GEM. He and I have known each other for a long time, and even with his funny accent I still enjoy hearing him share how God took him and called him into the ministry.

First, I wanted to briefly share why I'm so passionate about this organization.

Europe is the least-reached continent on the globe in terms of percent of believers. In some Northern European nations, Christ-followers make up less than 1% of the population. When I think about that and how laser-focused GEM is at seeing the entire continent evangelized and

discipled, I get excited. The opportunity is tremendous, even more now with the ravages of war taking place in Ukraine.

Greater Europe Mission has been making disciples for 70 years, beginning on the heels of World War II. Though much has changed since then, the heartbeat of GEM has not. The heartbeat is still to reach Europe and multiply disciples.

When I hear Jon talk about seeing the lost in Europe come to Christ, I get fired up. His passion for the Lord has encouraged my heart greatly over the years.

So with that said, will you please give a hand for the president of Greater Europe Mission, Jon Burns.

**JON:** Thank you, Rob. I'm beyond excited to be here and to be around some familiar faces and some new ones.

**ROB:** I'm excited as well, Jon. And I'd love to spend a few minutes going through your story because, like many of us, it's one of amazing life change, the kind of change only God can make happen.

So, tell us how your story begins, Jon. Where are you from?

**JON:** Well, with my accent, isn't it obvious? I'm from Dallas.

I'm kidding. I do live in Dallas now, but I grew up in England in the northeastern part of the country.

And it's safe to say I was a rebellious child. There's a Mark Twain quote that describes me well. "When I was a boy," he said, "my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand him. But as I got older, I was astonished how much the old man had learned in just a few years."

**ROB:** And now you're the old man!

**JON:** That's right! I am.

**ROB:** So, you're a rebellious youngster, and you come up with a plan that involves stealing dirt at a Billy Graham crusade? I'm sure everyone is curious about that story.

**JON:** Well, I was the grandson of church planters, but I wanted no part of church. When I was 17, however, I did want to ride in a church bus for a sinister reason.

I wanted to steal some turf from a rival's soccer field, or what we foreigners call a football field. It just happened that Billy Graham was preaching a crusade at that very stadium. So, my friends and I hopped on a church bus pretending to want to hear Billy Graham. But really, we wanted to steal the turf off the enemy's field.

**ROB:** Well, how did your plan turn out?

**JON:** Well, my plan didn't go so well. But God's plan did. All of my friends and I got saved. It was a momentous time. Not only did I give my life to Christ that week, but I also met my future wife, Sandra on that church bus. We've been married 34 years now and have two wonderful daughters.

**ROB:** God has a way of redirecting our rebellion, doesn't he? So, did you go right into ministry after that?

**JON:** Well, I'd always wanted to be a policeman. So, after I finished school and turned 21, I joined the police in London. And that job would develop skills I'd need down the road, like how to counsel people in crisis. Most police in London are unarmed, so you have to start things off by being a peacemaker.

I was on the force for three years when God called me to ministry as a student pastor at an Anglican church.

**ROB:** From rebel to cop to pastor. Quite a career trajectory! Billy Graham's impact on your life wasn't quite finished yet though, was it? How did he come back into the picture?

**JON:** Well, when I was serving as a youth pastor, I went from local to regional to national ministry projects. I was heading up mission teams, leading different projects, and even training young evangelists.

That brought me to the attention of the Billy Graham Association. They adopted the program across Europe. That led me to meet with Billy himself. And what I remember most about that meeting is that he didn't want to talk about himself. He wanted to talk to me about my plans and my future.

He said "Get ready. God is going to take you global."

**ROB:** That's incredible. What an opportunity! What did God have in store for you next?

**JON:** So, at the time I was still in the U.K., Sandra and I were planting a church, pastoring, and launching a group that served as an incubator for business startups and charities. I became the chairman of a coalition of community groups and churches in Northeast England that were committed to mission and outreach.

I also founded Lionsraw, a nonprofit that reaches local communities through soccer events. Basically using sports passion for social change, I was able to take part in ministering to thousands during the 2012 Olympics in London.

As we began that, an old friend called me. He was the mobilization director for an organization called Greater Europe Mission. He asked if they could use the Olympics as an opportunity to serve. I was glad to help them out.

Sometime after that, some people told me I should move my sports charity to the U.S. since soccer was exploding. But I couldn't get a visa because my ministry didn't exist here. So GEM graciously stepped in and helped out. By this time I'd been helping them grow in the U.K. My admiration for their work continued to grow.

After the Olympics they brought me to America as a consultant, allowing me to work for them as an advisor for a few years and launch my sports ministry in the U.S.

**ROB:** So that's what got your foot in the door with GEM. How did you get to where you are now?

**JON:** In 2015, I was speaking at the GEM Into Conference. You and I sat down together, and you asked me what I thought GEM needed to change. After I shared some thoughts, you said "Let's do it. Please come join us as president." So, you know, it's your fault that I'm here!

So yes, in 2016, GEM asked me to be their president. I was the first-ever European to hold this role for GEM and I've been honored to do so now for 7 years.

What Billy Graham told me all those years ago has come true. God has taken me global. God has blessed me with the opportunity to help lead an organization dedicated to the mission of reaching Europe by multiplying disciples and growing Christ's church.

You know, Billy Graham was actually our first-ever donor. That's how much he believed in this mission of reaching Europe for Christ.

**ROB:** Well, Jon, we know that the opportunity to do exactly that in Europe is greater now perhaps than ever before. GEM has been running strong for 70 years, since World War II, because of God's faithfulness.



Now from what I hear, you're not just involved in church planting in Europe but here in the States, as well. Tell us what that's all about.

**JON:** It's true. It's not a part of GEM at all. Sandra and I live in a part of Dallas where there's not a church within seven miles. So, we planted a church this year. We have about 50-60 people that are a part of it, half of them with no church background at all. It's just something we felt we needed to do, and God allowed us to do it.

**ROB:** That's incredible, Jon. It sounds like God has been faithful to GEM — and you've been faithful in your journey with Him.

The theme for this weekend is “No greater mission, no greater moment.” What's that mean to you?

**JON:** It's really such a spot-on theme, isn't it? The mission to go into Europe and see a continent transformed with the Gospel is such an awesome task. It really is a post-Christian place. People have completely abandoned the faith. But at the same time, it's the most important continent in the world. So many people come to Europe for education, for work, for so many things. It's a vibrant hub of business, art, culture, you name it. It's just so diverse that if we can impact Europe, we can really impact the world. So that's our mission.

And we talk about no greater moment. Sarah touched on this earlier, but the number of refugees alone spread across Europe is mind-boggling. Now you have a war raging over there displacing even more people. People are fleeing their homeland. I truly, truly believe there has not been a greater moment, or a greater need for the Gospel to saturate Europe since World War II than the times we are in right now.

The spiritual darkness can feel so heavy at times there. But we know that where there is crisis, there's opportunity. Some ask, why Europe? We ask, why not? Where else would we be shining such a bright light where there is so much darkness? And that's our vision, right? We want to bring that hope to people who really feel hopeless. What an awesome, awesome mission.

**ROB:** Absolutely, Jon. I'm looking forward to all God has in store for GEM in the coming months and years.

**JON:** It really is a tremendous mission and moment for God's people. I look forward to hearing more about it all from our speakers this weekend.

**ROB:** So do I. Thanks, Jon.

**JON:** Thanks, Rob.

**ROB:** Folks, Jon's story is one of a rebellious young man in Europe coming to know Christ, be discipled, then live a life discipling others. That's what we want to do in Europe. We want to see people come to Christ, be discipled, and go make disciples themselves. I can't imagine a greater mission than that.

Thank you for your time.



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit  
Friday Morning: Session 2  
Shareholders' Report  
Chris Tweedy (6 min.)**

Good morning, friends.

My name is Chris Tweedy, and I'm the Chief Financial Officer for Greater Europe Mission.

I'm honored to be here with you this weekend and specifically to share just a glimpse of what Greater Europe Mission accomplished during this past year.

Like any business or organization with integrity, GEM is committed to being accountable and transparent. In these next few minutes, I'll cover what we call the shareholders' report. Some of

you have been investors in GEM for several years, and some of you are brand new to the work we're doing. I hope what I share with you today will be both informative and encouraging.

In the past few years, GEM has not been alone in dealing with the complexities of a global pandemic. But this year, the pandemic has faded into the rearview mirror with the war raging in Ukraine.

We believe where people see crisis, God sees opportunity. And from the first night Russia invaded Ukraine, GEM has been involved in ministering to the refugees fleeing their homeland.

Allow me to share some figures from GEM's work during the Ukraine crisis this year.

- We've been involved in over 30 working partnerships with local European entities to help meet tangible short-term and long-term needs.
- GEM has spent over \$250,000 on Ukraine relief efforts. Here a picture of some of those expenses (provide less detail — create a shorter list of what that has been spent here, but gloss over it. Everything from heaters, mattresses, vans...)
  - Over 60 center for refugee care received resources from the Ukraine Crisis Fund that GEM contributed to.
  - More than 21,000 Ukrainian refugees have been served by GEM and our partners.
  - We've purchased four vans that are bringing supplies over the border to help those still living in Ukraine.
  - The daily temperature in Ukraine in the month of February ranges from 29-35 degrees Fahrenheit. That chilly reality is why GEM purchased 53 space heaters in February for refugees.

- In the first eight weeks of the Ukraine war, GEM helped provide refugees fleeing to Moldova and Romania with much-needed supplies, such as mattresses, refrigerators, washing machines, dryers, stoves, generators, food, bedding, and toiletries.

This weekend you'll hear some more about the work going on in Ukraine. Again, God has presented us with a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel in the midst of a difficult time.

To shift the focus from Ukraine, I'd like to share some of our overall numbers. These represent approximately the past 12 months.

GEM missionaries and volunteers have participated in 3,610 Gospel conversations. That's 3,610 times where the Gospel has been shared. Praise God!

From those 3,610 conversations, 280 people made a decision to follow Christ.

GEM has over 400 Christian field workers as well as another 250 people who are engaged with GEM on a significant level. This includes board members, administrative staff, and volunteers. In our 2021-22 fiscal year, we were excited to send 42 missionaries into the field and appoint 51 new missionaries who will be trained and then sent out. God has blessed us in wonderful ways with the workers He's provided.

Taking a look at our financials from this past fiscal year, I want to assure you of GEM's commitment to being good stewards of what God has given us. 85 cents of every dollar given to GEM goes directly to program services and the global mobilization of new missionaries.

An incredible 100% of our total revenue of almost \$26 million came from individual donors just like you. We're incredibly thankful for the generosity of so many.

This is our third Vision Summit. So much in Europe has changed since our first summit in 2019, but our main purpose has not. We still long to reach Europe by multiplying disciples and growing Christ's church.

I can't overstate that your generosity is essential to our mission. None of what you'll hear about this weekend would be possible without your investment.

Later this weekend, you'll be given the opportunity to invest in what God is doing through GEM in Europe. And you've heard a portion of the impact your giving has made today. Imagine what your gift can do for equipping church planters and volunteers working diligently to spread the love of Christ to a spiritually empty people. This is our great mission and this is a great moment.

On behalf of everyone at Greater Europe Mission, thank you. We're honored to count you as our partners in reaching the people of Europe.



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**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**

**Friday Morning: Session 2**

**Overview – Jon will edit this speech himself, no edits needed right now from Eddie**

**Jon Burns (12 min.)**

Good morning.

I hope the report Kevin shared with you encourages you about the impact your generosity has made.

Over the past 70 years, Greater Europe Mission has been a part of exciting Kingdom growth throughout Europe. And while that work shouldn't go unnoticed, the mission and the moment are greater now than ever before.

Our theme this weekend is exactly that. "No greater mission, no greater moment." Let me unpack that and help you better understand why this isn't just a catchy slogan.

**The great mission is evangelizing and discipling Europe.** Only around 3.5% of the entire population of Europe identify as Christian. This is a continent that has abandoned the faith. The large cathedrals and churches with beautiful architecture that once held thousands of faithful Jesus followers now sit as hollow mausoleums of the faith. Spiritual darkness has enveloped the land.

Atheism and agnosticism reign in Europe. We use the term post-Christian, but that doesn't really describe the severity of the environment. There are even parts of Europe where that 3.5% number dips down to a tenth of a percent. Think about that. Some parts of Europe have virtually no presence of Jesus-followers whatsoever.

But Europe remains the most important continent in the world. Did you know that over half of the world's college students come to Europe for their education? [We have a college ministry in Lille....Jon will add some detail to this segment] It is a land of diversity, rich in the arts and culture. It's the center of the world's economy.

It is also a land of immigrants and refugees. A few years back, the Syrian refugee crisis brought millions of people into the region just to find a place of safety and security. Now refugees are fleeing Ukraine into other European nations, looking for that same safety and security.

Because of all this, the assumption among many American believers is that there is a lot of mission work taking place in Europe. The reality is Europe is the least evangelized continent in the world.

We believe if you reach Europe, then you can reach the world. That's why it's the greatest mission. Europe is unreached. It's critical. It's ready.

So that's the answer to the question "Why Europe," which many people who are unfamiliar with GEM ask. Impacting Europe will have a reach far beyond its borders.

**So let's look at the second part of this theme for the weekend. The "no greater moment" piece.**

Let me tell you something. As we started planning this weekend almost a year ago, we decided on the theme of "No greater mission, no greater moment." Before Russia ever invaded Ukraine, that was the theme we landed on.

And I'll tell you why.

Greater Europe Mission began some 70 years ago, right on the heels of World War II. Since then, we've worked to reverse the trend of secularization. A few years ago, the COVID pandemic hit. And it nearly knocked us off course.

We found ourselves trying to care for Europeans desperate for help, isolated from friends and family. At the same time, our own staff members couldn't get back home to see loved ones who were sick and dying from COVID. It was an incredibly stressful time. Even then, we thought to ourselves, "there is no greater moment than now for impacting the people of Europe with the truth of the Gospel."

Boy, were we wrong.

You know how when you go to the beach and get out in the water, the waves crash in on you? And it's not really a big deal, but when you get deeper, the waves get bigger. And they keep coming and coming. That's a bit how it's been for us these past few years. Wave after wave.



Sickness and then war. We've had to pivot, adjust, reallocate resources, all of that stuff. Things we didn't plan on.

But God knew, of course, that all of that would happen. He knew the great "moment" we were about to step into. And it's here. The nations in Europe are still figuring out life post-COVID. Now they're dealing with a war and a refugee crisis. And even a fuel crisis!

With so many people not anchored in the hope only Jesus can give, how will they survive this moment without someone helping them? That's the mission. This is that moment. It's Europe, and it's right now.

There are three pillars that really help define our work in Europe. These pillars are central to what we do.

**Our first pillar is partnerships.** We've been blessed to work with some amazing churches and parachurch organizations who share the same heartbeat we do in seeing Europe impacted with the Gospel. Reaching 740 million Europeans is not a task we can tackle alone.

Partnering with churches and relief organizations was a no-brainer back in February of this year. When the war in Ukraine started, we jumped into action, teaming up with others to get immediate relief to the refugees fleeing their country. We got 20 agencies around us to work together. We supported 40 different projects in the border nations of Ukraine in the first 12 weeks of the war.

Because of these partnerships, we were able to provide the most important, immediate needs like food, water, and clothing. Churches in the Ukrainian border nation of Moldova said, "Can you send us some beds? How about washing machines?" And so we did. Even though we're not a relief agency, we knew that was the first step to making a long-term impact on these people.

The focus was on loving people because God loves us. It wasn't about being a GEM thing or another organization's thing. Ego doesn't come into play during a war relief effort. Because of

strong partnerships, more refugees were helped. Because more refugees were helped, doors to Gospel conversations were opened.

**The second pillar is equipping.** We are built to train and equip disciples for Kingdom growth. That's a great mission in itself, right? But we do this in a very intentional way, using resources we've developed based on the way Christ equipped people. Jesus did it by being invested in them.

I'm so excited for you to hear our speakers who are the boots on the ground working to train local churches in living out the Gospel in their everyday lives. Because you'll realize quickly through their stories that equipping isn't always as simple as just strolling into a church with a Bible and some handbooks and an hour later everyone is ready to go preach the Gospel.

The equipping part is so important. We are not an organization that flies into a city, preaches an hour-long revival, then flies back out the next day. We're in it for the long haul. We help train churches to train their people to live lives that breed discipleship. We invest in the lives of others so *they* in turn invest in others.

**And our third pillar is transformation.** This is why we do the work of equipping people to disciple others. This is why we partner with other organizations and churches. We want to see transformation take place in lives all across Europe. What does this look like? It's vibrant churches, healthy communities, just governments, and the desire for peace outweighing the thirst for war in fractured nations. Where others see a crisis, God has given us a wonderful opportunity to evangelize a continent and watch them transform into committed disciples of Jesus.

We see it in other places. In Africa and Asia and South America, there's a tipping point. There is already a movement of the Gospel and conversions are taking place. People are becoming disciples and disciple-makers, and that's leading to transformation rippling out across entire continents. It's a beautiful thing to see.

With your help, we can make that tipping point happen. Together we can see transformation occur from the U.K. to Ukraine. We want to continue pushing resources into Europe to create these tipping points. We want to be catalysts for change, but really we want to equip those already in Europe to make that change happen. They're the ones already in the mix. They're the ones seeing transformation happen first-hand.

There's great spiritual unrest in Europe.

People's foundations are upside down. What used to be safe isn't safe anymore. I mean, think about it. What used to literally be home for millions of people is no longer home! Europe is shifting under their feet. It's stirring. People have been isolated. People are lonelier than they've ever been.

As the old adage goes, where we see crisis, God sees opportunity. And so here we are, months into a war, years into a pandemic and refugee crisis, pondering what's next.

Here's what I see. Here's what these next years will be like in Europe. Imagine those cathedrals once again, brimming with praise and worship. Imagine new churches springing up in spiritually desolate places.

Imagine refugees without a home finding their foundation in the hope of Jesus Christ. Imagine those who have been isolated and lonely discovering strength in the community of local believers.

Those are the moments I look forward to. Those are the moments that this great mission and this great moment will lead to. We pray you'll join us in making this mission and this moment in Europe matter.

Thank you.

*[Exit stage as video begins to play]*



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**  
**Friday Morning: Session 3**  
**Pillar 1: Partnerships**  
**Sarah Robins (6 min.)**

Good morning, everyone. I wanted to start today by talking about the first of our three pillars: partnerships.

From July 26 to August 11, 2024, roughly 9.7 million people will descend on the city of Paris, France, for one reason: the Summer Olympics. People will come from every continent to cheer on athletes from 206 countries as they compete in sports such as basketball, gymnastics, water polo, and even surfing.

While none of the team from GEM will be competing for a gold medal in Paris, we will be working towards an even greater mission as we seek to share the Gospel with thousands of people over the span of just a few weeks.

With a task *and* an opportunity so monumental, GEM can't do it alone. That's why we partner with various parachurch organizations and churches across Europe to increase our opportunities for ministry.

We aren't experts in logistics or planning, but we are experts in discipleship and multiplication. So by connecting with those who are great at the things we're not, we strategically develop partnerships that allow for greater Gospel impact.

Partnering with organizations such as Evangelism Explosion, Cru, and the International Mission Board gives us more opportunities to be in places we couldn't be otherwise, having spiritual conversations and meeting the needs of all kinds of people.

We believe that Europe is an unreached continent. Europe is also a diverse epicenter of art and culture. And in the past seven years, Europe has dealt with a refugee crisis, a global pandemic, and a war in Ukraine. There truly is no greater mission and no greater moment for the European people to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is a continent in crisis. GEM is there in the middle of it all.

With all that's gone on in Ukraine this year, GEM has been quick to help meet the needs of refugees fleeing the country. The tiny country of Moldova, one of the poorest in Europe, has seen over 300,000 refugees cross through their borders.

This is an excellent example of when our partnerships come into play. When organizations and churches were trying to meet the needs of this mass influx of Ukrainian refugees, they needed help. GEM partnered with them and provided funding for essentials that many of us take for granted. Food, water, clothing, housing, washing machines...GEM helped to provide many of these things for thousands of families who, overnight, found themselves without a home. It's

unfathomable to many of us to consider waking up in the night, hearing bombs exploding in the distance, then waking up family members to pack one or two bags of clothes and any other necessities and flee for safety. It's a situation no one can imagine and one we knew we needed to help with in any way possible.

Of our many partnerships throughout Europe, none are as crucial as that of the local church. Several GEM missionaries are part of different church planting networks. Last year alone, these networks are involved in a number of church planting networks, actively planting churches throughout Europe. These churches serve as places of authentic community and hope in a land saturated with spiritual darkness.

Something we say is that in Europe, the Gospel moves at the speed of relationships. And these are not easy relationships to develop. When you consider a quarter of the Gospel conversations we're having are with refugees and Muslims, you already have some difficult language, cultural, and religious barriers to cross. Partnering with other organizations and churches helps cross those barriers and gives us the opportunity to build relationships in hopes of seeing people come to know Jesus.

We know in the summer of 2024 those barriers will be magnified. The partnerships we have developed and will continue to develop will help us make a large impact for the kingdom at the Olympics and beyond. The ministry opportunities will be tremendous during those few weeks, but our goal is not over when the closing ceremonies end. We are in this for the long haul. And while millions of people will come and go during those few summer weeks in 2024, millions will still be there. We will have opportunities to minister to those in the hospitality industry and beyond. Those opportunities exist because of the deep passion our people have for seeing Europe reached with the Gospel.

There is no greater mission than spreading the Gospel in a land that needs it most. There is no greater moment than right now when so much change and upheaval is taking place. We are blessed to be a part of merging the mission and moment with opportunities to share the Gospel.

And many of these moments exist because of partnerships. With numerous organizations and churches, yes. But partnerships with people like you who support the work God is doing all across Europe. One of the initiatives we completed earlier this year was creating 30 border nation projects to assist refugees fleeing Ukraine. You can imagine the impact your partnership will have on the lives of those who have been displaced from all they've ever known.

Speaking of partnerships, not many in our organization do them better than Jason Lim. Jason serves in Frankfurt, Germany as one of our focus city leaders. Please give him a warm welcome as he comes to the stage. (Have Sarah add another sentence or two about her relationship with Jason.)



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**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**  
**Friday Morning: Session 3**  
**Pillar 1: Partnerships**  
**Jason Lim (10 min.)**

Good morning. My name is Jason Lim. I serve with GEM in Frankfurt, Germany, developing church plants throughout the region.

Now you might think, “Jason, you sure don’t look German.” And you’d be right. But my mother is German, and my wife is German, so it all evens out, right?

Here’s some background: I grew up as a missionary kid in Thailand. My dad is South Korean and my mom is German. In sixth grade, I met the young lady who would one day become my

wife. She is German but was born and raised in Bangladesh. Like me, she grew up with a missionary background.

I tell you all that to clue you in on the importance of multicultural discipleship. That's what the city of Frankfurt is all about. To give you an idea of the many cultures and ethnicities that live in Frankfurt, there's this statistic. 54% of the population in Frankfurt are either foreign or have an immigrant background. That's over half of the population. That helps you to understand why Frankfurt is one of GEM's focus cities. The opportunities to disciple people of varying nationalities and backgrounds are tremendous. It's something I'm incredibly passionate about.

But the truth is, I wasn't always this way.

In high school, I lived quite a double life. Saturday nights, I was up partying until 2:00 a.m. and then groggily playing along with the worship band at church the following day.

My life came to a point where it was like I was riding skis, and as I'm going down the mountain, the skis begin to separate further and further apart. It got uncomfortable after a while, and I knew I had to make a decision. Either this Christian faith was real and not just my parents' thing, or I needed just to drop it. And I realized then that my life was based on things that were fragile and unreliable, not on God.

So after high school, I began studying civil engineering. But I felt a pull toward ministry. My dad and I had a conversation. I couldn't see myself in engineering, but I could see myself investing in the lives of others. So I chose to go to seminary, where God quickly captured my heart and called me into the field of church planting.

After I finished seminary, I moved to Frankfurt, where I began church planting and getting more involved with the work GEM was doing. During those early years in Frankfurt, God transitioned me from being the pastor of one church to getting more involved with regional projects and helping get more churches planted.



As I stated before, Frankfurt is a diverse city. Many ex-pats live there. It doesn't even have quite a million people living in it but it's still a center for international travel and a significant hub for the European Central Bank.

The city is divided into 46 districts. Each district is essentially a village. In our neighborhood alone, roughly three out of every four people are foreigners or have an immigrant background. The opportunity to reach numerous cultures is incredible.

It's very diverse. It's also low-income and has a large percentage of people age 18 and younger. This means we have the chance to develop relationships with a generation of jaded people who haven't even considered the impact of God on their lives. In Frankfurt, we're partnering with groups like the International Mission Board and City to City, among other organizations. These church-planting partnerships make it possible for us to do some amazing things, like training lay people in local churches how to effectively evangelize to their lost co-workers and neighbors throughout Frankfurt.

Partnerships were a motivating factor for my decision to join GEM. And now I have the opportunity to lead numerous partnerships with other ministries. The relationships we have with other ministries helps us to reach the diverse group of people in the city.

I tell my wife when we visit her parents, who live in a more rural area, that I'm always aware that I look different. But in our community, on our street, I never think about it. Just to give you a picture of it, think about this...

I'm the product of a South Korean man and a German woman. Next door to us is a family from Algeria. On the other side of us is a Romanian woman who is married to an African-American man from Chicago.

The people living above us are Italian German. Above that, they're Croatian. Above that, they're Pakistani. Around the corner is a man from Ghana whose wife is from another African country.

The diversity is beautiful where we live.

That's not to say diversity is without challenges. There are language barriers to cross and cultural differences to work through. But the church must be at the forefront of meeting these challenges.

There is a biblical call for us to embrace multicultural ministry. This is how the Kingdom should look. Just as Paul says in Ephesians, we are one body. There is no Jew. There is no Greek. This is the radical grace of our Savior, poured out for everyone.

One of my church-planting friends is from Cameroon. He's planted a church in a nearby city and we work together closely. He's always told me, "Jason, if I want to have deep fellowship with people like me, my personality, my age, and my phase in life, that's easy. I don't need Jesus for that. But if I want to have deep relationships with people that are incredibly different from me culturally, I need Jesus for that." Multicultural ministry has no choice but to trust fully in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We collaborate with other great organizations such as the International Mission Board, City to City, and Evangelical Alliance. We also have the opportunity to partner with missionaries from Pioneers and Christar. These partnerships form a group that's pushing church plants across the region. Our church, as an example, has around 50 to 60 people, and we're planting daughter churches from it. Through key strategic partnerships, we are able to get churches placed where basically no churches exist.

In the northern part of Frankfurt, there are around 200,000 people. There are around 10 churches currently for those 200,000. And in those churches, there are only about 100 people each.

I'm currently mentoring 4-5 church planters that are looking to get things going in these communities where so few houses of worship exist. It takes time because we want to make sure these church planters are ready. But the need is great.

In Germany, only about 2% of the population profess to be Christian. If we are going to reach the other 98%, we have to work together. The need is too great for any one of our churches to think they can do it alone. This is exactly why we need the partnerships with IMB, City to City, and the other organizations.

When we break it down, there are three great needs in Frankfurt and all across Germany.

First, as I mentioned, **only 2% of the population is Christian.** That's a lot of people who don't know Jesus.

Secondly, not only are there a lot of people who don't know Jesus, **there are a lot of people who don't know anyone else who knows Jesus.**

Thirdly, and this is the greatest need, is that **the few who do know someone who knows Jesus still never hear about Jesus.** If we don't overcome this third need, how can we ever solve the other two? Your partnership can help solve these problems as we seek to train more and more believers in Europe to be disciple-makers. We can't do this great work alone. We need partnerships all across Europe. We need partnerships with you.

This past year we took part in a community-wide event at a local park. Everyone in the neighborhood was invited just to eat and hang out. It was the first time since the pandemic shut everything down that we were able to all get together in person. It was super fun.

Our church helped out, bringing food and drinks and whatever else we needed to do. So we're hanging out at this event, and one of our leaders is talking to this older Vietnamese woman. She's striking up a conversation with the woman and gets the opportunity to talk to this sweet lady from Vietnam about Jesus.

And during this conversation, this Vietnamese woman is blown away. She's never heard about Jesus. She's like, "This is crazy. No one has ever told me about this! This is amazing!"

So just think back for a minute to the first time the Gospel really captivated you. That first time the Gospel grabbed a hold of you and you thought “Wow! This is amazing.” Do you remember that moment? That’s exactly what was happening with her.

Earlier this summer, we had the awesome privilege of baptizing this woman. In our diverse church with Germans, Kenyans, Ukrainians, you name it, this woman came to Christ and we baptized her. Standing up front, she said, “All my ancestors and the spirits we pray to...those spirits don’t have power over me anymore because I’m under the power of Jesus Christ.”

It was such an awesome time. When my wife and I moved to our home, there was no church in this neighborhood of 17,000 people. And here we were, watching this Vietnamese woman completely changed by the grace of Jesus Christ. And it’s all thanks to lay leaders coming alongside her and investing in her.

In Revelation 7:9-10, John writes this:

*After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, “Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!”*

What an awesome picture of what heaven will be like. People from every nation and every language together, praising the Lord. People from Vietnam. People from Russia, Croatia, Nigeria, and Iran. People from Bangladesh, China, India, and Thailand. People from Germany and people from America. All people coming together to worship the One, the Only One worthy of our praise. People who don’t care about their differences anymore, because the one thing they all have in common is the one thing that matters the most.

There is indeed no greater mission and no greater moment. I’m honored to be a part of it and to have had the opportunity to share with you this morning. I pray that you’ll become a part of it as well.

Thank you.

*[Exit stage as video begins to play]*



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit  
Friday Evening: Session 4  
Pillar 2: Equipping  
Dwight Poggemiller/ Dani Cociuba (12 min.)**

Good evening!

My name is Dwight Poggemiller, and I have the honor of serving as the Training and Development Leader for GEM in Europe.

I'm here to talk about equipping, which is our second pillar. We're in the area of equipping because GEM has allowed us to do this work. Through funding from GEM, we've been able to do some tremendous work for the gospel. Phase one was about getting to the next phase. Initially we provided for physical needs, but now we're shifting to phase two, which is equipping

I equip new workers and partners, specifically in evangelism, discipleship, and **disciple multiplication**. These are core components for GEM as we equip people with the tools they need to make disciples. Tools like our **Disciple** Multiplication Training curriculum, which is based directly on biblical principles.

My wife Melissa and I serve in the city of Timisoara on the extreme western side of Romania. This university city of 330,000 is where we **as a family** train and equip followers of Jesus to disciple others. We partner with Evangelism Explosion and **a dear brother and friend** named Daniel Cociuba, whom you'll be hearing from shortly.

In Romania, we're equipping **workers not only to serve across Romania, but to go serve in other countries**. We partner with Romanian churches to make this happen. It's been incredibly rewarding to come alongside others to help them do what they do best, but do it more effectively.

My introduction to GEM came through a summer missions program several decades ago. I served for a summer teaching English in Bulgaria. It was long enough to give me a real taste of international missions. It wasn't just a week-long trip. I was there serving for six weeks dealing with the cultural stress of a new place.

During that summer, God showed me that Europe was a land rich with opportunities to reach the lost. **Six** years after that summer serving as an English instructor, I met Melissa, and we've been serving now for over 21 years.

God is readying a harvest, and we're encouraged by what's to come in Romania and all of Europe. Europe is part of the 40-70 Window, the forgotten region of global missions. "Forgotten" is a better way to term it as it has been "reached" in the traditional missiological use of the term. We are looking to reach these people and disciple them, and train them to disciple others.

No matter what profession they're in, whether working in an office, teaching in a Christian school, or doing social work, we want them to understand that ministry can take place anywhere. God can use them to make and multiply disciples.

We do this through some incredible partnerships. One of those is with Evangelism Explosion and my friend Dani Cociuba. Will you welcome him to the stage?

*—Dani Cociuba comes on stage and joins Dwight behind the podium or on stools.*

**DWIGHT:** Dani, welcome. We're glad you could join us this weekend. Can you tell everyone a little about what you do with Evangelism Explosion?

**DANI:** Thank you, Dwight. I have been involved with Evangelism Explosion now for 13 years. I help equip churches, believers, and organizations on how to share the Gospel more efficiently with relevance, authenticity, and impact. That's what I'm passionate about. I want to see them live a lifestyle where, day-by-day, they are sharing the Gospel and multiplying disciples.

**DWIGHT:** That's great. And I think you and I share that same passion. That's probably why we hit it off so many years ago and became friends. Can you tell everyone how you got involved in partnering with GEM?

**DANI:** Of course! I was at GEM's first discipleship multiplication training back in Dublin in 2012. You and I hosted this training in the fall in Romania.

I remember telling you, "You have invested so much in me and in our team. What we share now is so much better and fuller. It has brought us the discipleship aspect of what Evangelism Explosion does."

**DWIGHT:** So, Dani, you've been in Romania your entire life. You served in the army there, you became a follower of Jesus there, and now you're serving in missions there. Tell us about the country and the spiritual climate of Romania. What's it like, and how is your work there making an impact?

**DANI:** The churches in Romania love Christ and are open to help and get involved when needed. But many churches are also focused on the inside. Many do not equip people to live what we call an evangelistic and discipleship lifestyle. What that lifestyle looks like is when believers use the relationships they naturally have through their workplace and neighborhoods to

have spiritual conversations and talk to others about Jesus. Many pastors struggle with how to renew the vision and passion of the believers to live a discipleship lifestyle.

Christians are very busy. They own businesses, work, and have families. We want to teach them to be more relaxed in evangelism and discipleship, to make it more of a lifestyle than just a program. So we teach them ways to initiate conversations that can lead to sharing the Gospel. We teach them ways to care for their neighbors that might not always come naturally. And it's been so encouraging to see the churches involved with what is happening in Ukraine. They're learning through caring for refugees how to also care for people they know through work and other places.

**DWIGHT:** I know the situation in Ukraine is on everyone's mind here this weekend. Dani, I know you had a unique experience related to the turmoil there and when it first began earlier this year. Talk a little about your experience serving the refugees fleeing Ukraine.

**DANI:** I arrived in Chisinau, the capital city of Moldova, on the evening of February 23. The next day I planned a series of trainings there with partners, but discovered the airports were closed because Russia had invaded Ukraine.

So I said, "Let's stay and keep with the plan." So I was going to continue serving the seminaries and equipping churches. But some of my friends in Chisinau asked me if I would come alongside them and help with the refugees since I was here. So I said, "Sure. Let's go."

Some people back home in Romania said, "Dani, come home. Take a **train** and come home." But I said, "If my brothers here will die, then I will die."

**DWIGHT:** Wow. You were committed to helping wherever needed it sounds like. You know, GEM has been pouring into leaders like you for years. And because we were faithful to this equipping work when we weren't in crisis, we weren't starting from scratch when the crisis hit. I believe you mentioned In the past year, you trained more believers and saw more fruit than at



any point in the previous year. This wouldn't have happened without strategic investment in Equipping efforts.

**DANI:** Exactly. You're right about that, Dwight.

So I stayed in Moldova to help. Immediately my friends and family began sending money. My daughter was first, and Dwight, you were the second one to give!

It was a great blessing because from that moment, our friends and organizations we were partnering with helped. Greater Europe Mission helped the refugees by helping the churches financially. And because I was already in Moldova for two years, and GEM was already investing in the region, when the war began, we were ready.

So I talked with friends and we took care of those first basic needs. Water, tea, coffee, sandwiches, those kinds of things. But then we began thinking about what we needed to do for the medium and long-term. This obviously wasn't going to be just a few days or weeks.

It was cold. It was wintertime. We needed heaters. Immediately we negotiated the prices and began buying dozens and dozens of these heaters for rooms in 15-20 centers.

And like I said, because I had been there for years and GEM had a presence there, we were able to meet these needs and so much more.

**DWIGHT:** That's incredible. So you found yourself inadvertently caught in Moldova without an easy way out and knew God had placed you there to help.

**DANI:** That's right. So then we see the people are wet and cold and don't have many clothes. So we buy washing machines and dryers. Then we get refrigerators, microwaves, generators for electricity, different things like that. We get diapers and cleaning supplies. Just anything they might need, we got our hands on. And much of this was because GEM provided funds.

**DWIGHT:** And that was just the beginning, right? Because there are hundreds of thousands of refugees now in Moldova, the work you're doing there and the work GEM is doing is helping equip local churches to meet the physical and spiritual needs of those refugees.

While churches are handing out coffee, tea, and food to these refugees, they're sharing in the heart language of many of these refugees the Good News of Jesus Christ. And that's what it's all about.

Dani, as we wrap up, what are some ways people can pray for you in your ministry there in Romania?

**DANI:** Thank you, Dwight. I would ask prayer for wisdom. Wisdom with every interaction, whether it's a church partner, organization, or family. Wisdom with finances as well.

I would also ask for prayer for the students in seminaries. We have many who come and love to listen to speakers. But pray that more students would understand their responsibility to evangelize and disciple others. Pray they would realize their opportunity to make a great impact in churches, organizations, and around the world.

**DWIGHT:** Absolutely, Dani. We'll be praying for all of those things. And folks, I would ask you to pray for us as we seek to equip others to invite, disciple, and multiply. The need in Europe has never been more urgent. We've talked a lot about the war in Ukraine, but there is desolation and spiritual desperation across the entire continent.

Luke 10:2 says, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few." Europe is a 4-million-square-mile harvest field. It needs workers. It needs people to commit their years to evangelize and disciple this lost continent. There is no greater mission than this! And the moment has never been greater, either.

Just as the verse says, we'd ask you to pray. Pray to the Lord of the harvest for workers. He is ever-faithful to our every need.

Thank you.

*[Exit stage as video begins to play]*



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**  
**Saturday Morning: Session 5**  
**Pillar 3: Transformation**  
**Rachelle Neal (6 min.)**

Good morning!

It's an honor to be with you all. I'm Rachelle Neal, and serve as the Vice President of GEM's efforts in Europe.

I have the pleasure of talking to you about the third pillar, something that's dear to my heart: transformation.

At the age of 6, I knew I would be a missionary.

I grew up a pastor's kid in Oregon. And at 12, God called the rest of my family into missions.

We moved to Germany, where my parents served as church planters. Sharing Christ was just part of my DNA from an early age. I love seeing the transformation that takes place when someone stops living for themselves and begins living for Christ.

Transitioning from America to Europe at the age of 12 had its struggles. Looking back now, I see it was then that I began truly walking with the Lord and growing in my faith.

In college, God confirmed my call to missions. After graduation, I went to the Czech Republic to serve for one year and stayed five. To make a long story short, I met my husband on the mission field a few years later. He was actually the first person I recruited for my mission team. We were married, and God sent us to North Macedonia, where we served for 15 years until this summer.

I use the word served, but we didn't serve as typical missionaries. At least that's not what those we came to know in North Macedonia would identify us as. See, my husband served as a businessman. I served as an educator. Through these occupations, we developed relationships with Macedonians to share the Gospel and disciple them.

As cross-cultural workers who used business as mission, we saw transformation happen in ways we would have never thought possible. We started an English language school. This met a need for the people in Macedonia who wanted to learn English.

The churches there had done a great job meeting the humanitarian needs after the war when the nation broke away from Yugoslavia. What the church was ineffective at, however, was reaching the business community.

So what we found in opening this school was the opportunity to reach a sector that wasn't being reached previously. To our surprise, we suddenly could reach the government sector. We had people from the crisis management group, an equivalent to the Department of Homeland Security, coming through our school to learn English. We had people from the mayor's offices. We had embassy workers. We just had people coming through our doors that we were able to build relationships with that churches would not naturally have had the opportunity to do so. Those are the places where transformation is often the sweetest—when it's unexpected.

And instead of us knocking on doors to build those relationships, the relationships came to us. And through those classes and conversations, we built relationships and developed trust. To this day, many of our friends came first as students to our classes years ago.

Developing these relationships wasn't always easy. We experienced challenges along the way. Because we were entering the mission field through the business world, we worked to establish our credibility.

We were even questioned at times as to why we would follow certain regulations and laws in establishing our business. We wanted to be people of integrity. They'd ask, "Why are you doing that?" and we'd simply say, "Because we really think that's the right thing to do." Ministry doesn't always happen with direct words. Often it begins by the way we live our lives, showing Christ to others. Then because of the relationships and trust built, we are able to more effectively share about Christ.

Now we are in Frankfurt, Germany, my desire is to come alongside other leaders in the mission and help create an environment that equips, empowers, and inspires missionaries to go back to their local communities and build disciples. This happens best when we are ministering to our own ongoing transformation as the Lord works in our lives. Then we live out God's Kingdom values and principles in the sphere of influence he's placed us in. It should be a normal function of everyday life whether in a church setting, business setting, or simply within our neighborhood. That's where real transformation happens.

GEM is not about reinventing the wheel. It's about partnering with organizations and churches to better equip others. Our focus is on building God's Kingdom, not our own.

And transformation is at the core of who we are. Even though I ~~do~~ used education development and we do refugee work and anti-trafficking initiatives, the work doesn't stop there. In doing those things, we're helping to care for the whole person while sharing the wonderful news of Jesus Christ. There is no greater mission than that. There is no greater moment than now to be doing it.

I mentioned we recently moved to Germany. One of our critical areas over the coming months and years is our focus cities. We are looking to raise leaders in three cities: Berlin, Frankfurt, and Birmingham. We're excited for you to be a part of equipping disciples to transform these cities for the gospel.

The transformation that we've been a part of has led people to Christ. Most of the time, it's simply about planting and watering seeds. And now we can invest in other leaders so they can go out and plant those seeds in hopes of making more disciples.

That's been my desire since I was a little girl in Oregon, all of 6 years old, ready to go tell the world about Jesus. What greater mission is there than that?

Some of you were here three years ago for our first Vision Summit. At that event, we heard from Suzy Penner, who served for years as a GEM missionary. She was a wonderful part of the GEM family and a bright light. We were so sorry to lose her to cancer 18 months ago. Our next speakers encountered Suzy in the mission field many years ago.

I can't think of a better couple to talk to you about real transformation than our next speakers. I know you'll be inspired and encouraged by them as I was when I was their team leader. Will you please welcome Nora and Pajtim Smolica to the stage?



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**  
**Saturday Morning: Session 5**  
**Pillar 3: Transformation**  
**Nora and Pajtim Smolica (12 min.)**

**PAJTIM:** Good morning. My name is Pajtim Smolica, and this is my wife, Nora. We serve as field leaders for Greater Europe Mission in Kosovo. We're excited to be with you today and share our story.

**NORA:** Imagine for a moment that you are a young child growing up in Albania. You go to the local mosque with your family and learn the Arabic language. You pray the Muslim prayer five times each day. You grow up knowing only about what the Qu'ran teaches. You grow up from a child to a teenager, then from a teenager to an adult. And in your time growing up in the Muslim faith, you never hear about Jesus.

By God's grace, this is not my story.

I did grow up in Kosovo in a Muslim family. We were a family committed to following the tenets of Islam. We read the Qu'ran, prayed, and attended mosque regularly. But unlike many Muslim families, I would one day hear about this person named Jesus.

**PAJTIM:** Nora and I have been serving as missionaries with GEM for over five years. We serve in the city of Pristina, the capital of Kosovo.

As Nora alluded to, Kosovo is largely a Muslim nation. Over 90% of the country identifies as Muslim. This reality presents its own challenges in evangelizing and discipling those in the country.

But Kosovo is also a young nation. 70% of the population is 35 years old or younger. So much of our ministry is focused on reaching Muslim children and youth. We partner with local churches and run weekly programs for kids and young people, much like the one Nora was exposed to as a child that led her to Jesus.

Because we are Christians working in a land surrounded by Muslims, we cannot be as open about our faith as we would like. We do not face the persecution some believers would in the Middle East. But in Kosovo, the persecution comes in the form of being shunned by those closest to you.

Earlier this year, three girls in our club told us they became believers. Those stories are exciting for us. But we also know that choosing to follow Christ as a young person in Kosovo can create challenges. We've had instances where parents would kick their children out of their homes because of their faith in an attempt to keep them from coming to church.

**NORA:** One day, when I was a child, a friend invited me to a kids' club. I've since learned that the woman running the club, Suzy Penner, was a GEM missionary. It was at this club where I played games and made new friends. Most importantly, this was where I heard about Jesus.

I didn't know anything about Jesus. All I knew about religion were the things I took from my family and our times at the mosque.

But Suzy spent time with me, teaching me more and more about Jesus. Through these regular interactions with her, I decided to give my heart to Jesus. I didn't even realize at the time that Suzy was discipling me. I just knew here was a woman who loved me and cared about me and became my friend.



I was 12 when I made the decision to follow Jesus. But I still wanted to please my family. I prayed and asked God to give me a sign. I asked Him to show me if I should continue to go to the mosque or if should I choose to only follow Jesus.

Then one day as I went to the mosque for an Arabic course, I entered the classroom and was told by the teacher that I was no longer welcomed there. They heard I was going to the Christian place, and I couldn't come to the mosque anymore. I was embarrassed in front of my friends. I felt terrible.

But on the way home, I realized that God had given me the sign I asked for. He made it clear to me that I was to follow Him. Jesus transformed my life.

I remember as a young person feeling afraid of telling my friends that I was going to church on Sunday. But Suzy was always there for me, telling me "I'm here for you. Let's go to church." She was a wonderful mentor for me. She was a wonderful friend. And that's exactly what Pajtim and I want to be to these young people we disciple each week.

**PAJTIM:** Like Nora, I too was raised Muslim and began a personal relationship with Christ thanks to a kid's club. I know the importance of the church's work in Muslim communities.

Throughout all of Kosovo, there are only 26 churches. Most of them are very small churches. Combined with the large number of young people in the nation, there is a tremendous opportunity for the Gospel in Kosovo and all across the Balkan nations.

With 1.8 million people living in Kosovo and only 26 churches, that equates to each church trying to serve almost 70,000 people. That's an impossible task. That's why we are asking for your help in reaching those in Kosovo and the surrounding Balkan nations.

Luke 10:2 says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." It's this verse that prompts Nora and me and many others throughout GEM to set an alarm each day at 10:02. This alarm reminds us to take time and pray for God to send workers into the mission field because the

harvest is indeed plentiful. There are nearly 2 million people in Kosovo, many of which have never heard the Gospel. They don't have an understanding of the love God has for them. They don't know the story of Jesus giving His life for them.

**NORA:** Transformation can only happen because of what Jesus does for us. But for many of the young people we work with, transformation doesn't happen overnight. We partner with churches to run these programs for children and young people, but it takes time to develop trust with them.

For some families, when they realize that we are teaching their children about Jesus, they stop allowing their children to come. For others, they've been coming to our programs for years. They started coming as young children and are now teenagers. Some make the decision to follow Jesus. There are some who haven't. And that's okay because we have that trust with them.

Some people in our church are in their twenties and still have not told their families that they are Christians out of fear. To this day, many in my own family don't understand why I became a Christian. And I've had friends who decided to end our friendship because I'm a Christian.

Again, it takes time to build a relationship. It takes time to disciple others. I began going to Suzy's program as a child and not until the age of 12 did I choose to follow Jesus. And because of that time Suzy and her husband Ernie invested in people like me, I now have that foundation of godly mentorship so that I can disciple young people myself.

**PAJTIM:** Kosovo as a nation has been through quite a bit of transformation in the past 25 years or so. The conflict and unrest of the late 1990s resulted in a war that cost thousands of civilians their lives and forced many more to flee the nation.

In 2008, Kosovo declared its independence. This makes the nation one of the newest in the world. The USA provided Kosovo with much support during the war. With America's support of the people of Kosovo, many in the country are receptive to Americans who visit. Just being American can open doors for conversation in Kosovo.

When we pray for workers for the harvest, we pray for American hearts to be stirred with compassion for the people of Kosovo. So many are lost and in need of the Gospel. But we also know that the work to disciple the people in Kosovo requires time. And as time passes, the receptiveness to hear the Gospel from Americans will slowly wane.

**NORA:** I was nine years old during the war. I remember how much it meant for us to get out of the war. As my generation grows older, the next generation coming won't feel the same way. When we say there is no greater mission at no greater moment, we're talking about this. The Ten-Two idea: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few." We would ask you to pray for those workers. Pray for God to bring workers to the Balkans. Pray God would send workers to Kosovo to share the Gospel and disciple those who desperately need to hear the Good News of Jesus.

**PAJTIM:** I had been praying at 10:02 each day for a few months when I got an email. There was a young lady interested in coming to Kosovo to serve. She had never been to Kosovo before. Then sometime after that, another lady joined our team. God has steadily sent even more workers since then. We know that prayer works. We know that God is blessing your generosity by sending workers to places like Kosovo where the harvest is certainly plentiful. There is no greater mission and there is no greater moment. We know this because, in spite of the brokenness across the Balkans, God is opening more doors than ever before by bringing workers and renewing passion for the Gospel in the local churches.

**NORA:** Transformation is beautiful, but it is not always easy. For me, learning about Jesus and His love for me was wonderful. Choosing to follow Him is the best decision I've ever made. Still, it was not without cost. It brought distance between me and my friends. It brought distance between me and my family.

And when Pajtim and I were married, my family was unsure about even coming to the church for the wedding. They thought even entering the church might make them Christians. But they did all come and our pastor preached an evangelistic sermon at our wedding. We wanted the Gospel preached.

My family thought my Christianity was just a phase. My father told me I'd be single forever because nobody wanted to marry a Christian. But he was happy that I did find a husband in Pajtim. "At least you found someone like you," he told me.

**PAJTIM:** Nora's dad liked me because he knew I was a good guy. But I was a good guy because I was a Christian.

After our wedding, Nora's family actually began coming to church. Nora's mom soon had some health issues. Because of her diabetes, they had to amputate one of her legs.

She was in the hospital for a while. When we'd visit her, we'd tell her the church was praying for her. When she got out of the hospital, Suzy and Ernie actually picked her up and brought her to church. And at church, to every person she met, she'd say "thank you for praying for me." Right now, she has not given her life to Christ. We ask for you to hold her in your prayers. Fada is her name. Please be praying for her.

**NORA:** Transformation can happen to anyone. It can happen anywhere. It can happen in Kosovo. It can happen even in the most devoted Muslim households. The Gospel is transformative. Jesus changes lives.

The harvest is indeed plentiful. I am living proof of God's grace and love. He used His workers to minister to me. He used His workers to teach me the Gospel. Both Pajtim and I have been transformed by the Gospel.



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**

**Saturday Morning: Session 6**

**President's Vision **Jon will edit this speech himself, no edits needed right now from Eddie Jon Burns (10 min.)****

[Jon will open by drafting off Nora and Pajtim's story.... "A number of GEM workers grew up as Muslim and then met Jesus...")

The man who led the synagogue was heartbroken. His grief weighed him down. But he had a glimmer of hope. There, just steps away was Jesus.

He came up to Jesus and told Him the tragic news: "My daughter has just died." But he believed Jesus could raise her from the dead. So Jesus started the trip to the man's home.

Do you know this story? If you do, you know what happens next.

Jesus gets interrupted. As He's going to see about the little girl who died, a woman interrupts Him. She's sick. So sick, in fact, that she's been dealing with bleeding for 12 years. No doctor has been able to help her. No friend, no family member, no one has been able to stop the bleeding.

This woman needs a miracle. She sees Jesus and thinks, "If I can just touch His robe, I will be healed." So she touches the fringe of His robe, and instantly she is healed! Jesus tells her that her faith has made her well.

Jesus dealt with interruptions constantly. He's on His way to heal one person when another needs help. He's preaching on a hillside but also needs to feed thousands of people. He's resting on a boat during a storm when the disciples interrupt His sleep, begging for Him to help.

These past few years, and this year in particular, Greater Europe Mission has dealt with interruptions. Just as we were coming out of a pandemic, war breaks out in Ukraine, disrupting peace. Before that, the Syrian refugee crisis forced us to pivot and meet needs we weren't planning for.

We develop long-term plans at GEM. We've got plans in place to pioneer new nations and to disciple new generations of volunteers who will then go out themselves and multiply disciples. This year, those plans were seemingly interrupted.

But as so often happens in life, the things we see as interruptions and distractions, God uses to bring Him glory. For us, what could have been an interruption was more like an accelerant. All the things we planned to do, such as pioneering new nations, working in key cities, and strengthening partnerships—all that is not only taking place, but it's also moving more rapidly than we could ever have imagined. What would have taken us five years has come about in five months.

When I think about how faithful God has been to the work He's blessed us with in Europe this year alone, a verse from the Psalms comes to mind. Psalm 78:4 says this:

*We will not hide these truths from our children;  
We will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord,  
about his power and his mighty wonders.*

I think about that verse for a few reasons. First, it points to the amazing work of God. We can stand here on stage and give you story after story of life change. We can give you statistics on the churches that have been planted, missionaries who have been sent, and Gospel conversations that have taken place.

None of that work is because of us. God has simply used GEM as His hands and feet to disciple others. But the missional part of Psalm 78:4 that really gets me excited is that part where the psalmist says “we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord.”

You might hear the phrase “next generation” and think of young people. You might think of children. But I think about that next big wave of disciples God has in store for us to train in Europe. I think about this generation’s fathers and grandfathers that we discipled, but it won’t look the same this time.

So how do we fulfill that passage? How do we tell the next generation about God’s power and mighty wonders? I really believe it’s all involved in the three pillars we’ve talked about this weekend.

Forming **partnerships** with like-minded organizations and churches to maximize opportunities for evangelism and discipleship.

**Equipping** people to share the Gospel with disciples who will make other disciples. To create a multiplication movement throughout Europe.

And of course, **transformation**. This is the sum of partnerships and equipping. We long to see hearts softened and lives shaped in the image of Christ.

So what does it look like going forward to successfully accomplish these three pillars?

First, at GEM, we intend to equip an army of 10,000 people — including volunteers — recruited, trained, and sent out throughout Europe. This is that next generation. We’re not looking to take these people from the church, we want to equip them back into their church, so others follow them.

That's something we do well, and we're uniquely placed in Europe to turn that upside down. An army of 10,000 volunteers can make a massive impact in Europe.

Along with this plan for 10,000 disciple-makers to be equipped, we're also moving into new nations. We have a vision to pioneer seven new nations in the next seven years.

We're ahead of schedule. Just this year we appointed our first missionary in Russia. You can imagine the great impact they'll have there. We've also appointed our first Slovakian missionary. Moldova and Norway are also real possibilities.

There might be unimaginable darkness with all that's gone on in recent years in Europe, but God is opening doors in the midst of it all for us to go in and minister.

Since World War II, we've put resources into a growing continent to preach the Gospel and multiply disciples. And I truly believe there has never been a more important moment to do this mission in Europe than now.

Seven years ago, we thought the task was great because of the Syrian refugee crisis. Then 2020 comes, and the COVID pandemic hits. We thought that was going to be a massive undertaking, pivoting strategies to minister during quarantine. But then this year comes and we have the worst military conflict since World War II taking place in Ukraine. Millions of refugees fled the country while its infrastructure was destroyed. Entire towns and villages have been wiped away. Thousands of innocent civilians have died.

And in the middle of such despair and such extreme darkness, people want to know, "Is there hope?" We want an army of volunteers across the entire continent ready to tell these people that "YES! Yes, there is hope! And His name is Jesus Christ! Let me tell you all about Him."

[pause]



So what part do *you* play in this? What role might God have *you* participate in during this great mission and great moment?

I believe over the next decade, real transformation can happen across Europe. We've got focus cities where we're seeing the tide turn. Places like Frankfurt and Birmingham. We've got these new pioneer nations opening up, begging for us to come and share hope with the people there. We've got this burning desire to see 10,000 disciple-makers equipped for sharing the Gospel.

But honestly, I need your help.

Do you know what happens at the end of the story where Jesus goes to raise the dead girl to life? He comes into the town where this synagogue leader lives. He sees this large crowd of people weeping and mourning. There's funeral music playing. It's a sad, somber scene.

And this is what Jesus says. Jesus tells the mourners to get out. He tells them all to leave. Then he says this: *The girl isn't dead; she's only asleep.*

The people gathered around and laughed at him. They walked out of the house, shaking their heads, wondering who this crazed lunatic was thinking this girl was just sleeping.

But Jesus went in, took the girl by the hand, and helped her up. News of this miracle spread all across the countryside.

Folks, I want to tell you this: *Europe is not dead. Europe is asleep.* And God has called GEM, in all humility, to go into all the nations of Europe, take them by the hand, and tell them to wake up!

God has called us to take this great mission in this great moment and bring light into the darkness. He's called us to go into Paris and Frankfurt and Prague, and be the light on the hill. He's called us to go to Kosovo and Romania and Moldova and Ukraine and be His hands and feet.

God is calling us to go make disciples of all these nations and teach them the commands He's given us. God is also calling you to be a part of His work. The harvest is plentiful — but the workers are few! Are you willing to help?

The people in Europe are asleep. We need you to help us open their eyes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

There is no greater mission. There is no greater moment.

Now I want to invite GEM's U.S. Executive Director to the stage: Kevin Brown.



WESTFALL GOLD

**GEM Fall 2022 Vision Summit**

**Saturday Morning: Session 6**

**Giving Portfolio Kevin will edit this speech himself, no edits needed right now from Eddie Kevin Brown (8 min.)**

Thank you for being with us this weekend. I truly hope that you've been able to feel the passion Jon and all of our speakers this weekend have for the work going on in Europe. I love GEM and I count it a privilege to be with this ministry.

I wanted to take a few minutes to share with you some specific needs and opportunities around GEM's goals and vision for this next year.

If you will please open the booklet you received, you'll see giving opportunities in each of these three pillars. I'll walk us through just one or two under each pillar, but you will have time later this afternoon to dig more deeply into them.

Projects that support our first pillar, **Partnerships**, can be found on pages 4 and 5.

During our talks from the first pillar on partnerships, you heard Sarah share along with Jason about the tremendous opportunities GEM has had with various organizations and local churches across Europe. These partnerships have only become more crucial this year with the war in Ukraine.

One of our goals this year focuses on supporting the people of Ukraine. We want to resource 30 churches in Ukraine with relief needs. We plan to continue to develop 30 border refugee projects and create 30 new Ukrainian church plants spread across 10 European countries. We believe this

will help fill a void for many refugees that have fled Ukraine and now are making their homes in other places. Doing this work will cost \$750,000.

We also want to train 750 students, ages 18-23, in disciple-making from colleges and universities all across Europe. It's imperative we train up young people already in Europe to disciple in a place they're already familiar with. A gift of \$75,000 will fund this need.

For establishing and maintaining partnerships across GEM, our fundraising goal is \$7,350,000.

Our second pillar this weekend was around **Equipping**. Please turn to pages 6 and 7.

You heard Dwight and Dani talk about their roles in equipping believers throughout Europe to go and make disciples. These figures show our anticipated costs in some specific areas around equipping.

Our intent is to train 1,000 volunteers in Discipleship Multiplication, which we believe will launch a new missional movement across Europe. To take on this great task, we're asking God for \$2,262,000.

An area GEM has worked on for years is the concept of focus cities. These are strategic places where GEM feels resources should be used for maximum effectiveness in discipleship. Our goal this year is to launch four strategic Focus City leaders in Berlin, Frankfurt, Athens, and Birmingham. To do this, the expense will be \$288,000.

For equipping across all areas of GEM, our fundraising goal is \$7,800,000.

For the needs in our third pillar, **Transformation**, please turn to pages 8 and 9.

Rachelle, Nora, and Pajtim spoke on transformation. The work taking place in North Macedonia and Kosovo is transforming lives. I was with Pajtim and Nora in the field last summer. The work

they are doing deserves our support. For that work to flourish, we have three key goals we're looking to accomplish in the coming year.

First, we want to equip five new church planters and establish them in five key cities. This goal will cost \$110,000.

Next, we are looking to pioneer a new GEM ministry in Russia. You can imagine the complexities of this in the current climate, but we feel strongly that the people of Russia need to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. The expense for this project is \$1,000,000.

Our third goal under the pillar of transformation involves something Sarah spoke to. We desire to really make an impact at the 2024 Summer Olympics in Paris. What a tremendous opportunity to share the Gospel during one of the largest global events! This outreach will cost \$240,000.

Our fundraising goal around the pillar of transformation is **\$12,400,000**.

Now if you would, please take a moment to look at your response form. You will see giving amounts at the top, which indicate the varying levels of support.

You can give your support to one of the three pillars we've talked about. Or, if you're just excited about the overall mission of GEM, consider a gift to the general fund. Doing so ensures your gift will be put to work quickly where it's most needed.

Next, please let us know how and when you intend to fulfill your gift. Please note that you have two calendar years to fulfill your commitment.

So please indicate: How much of your intention to give do you plan to fulfill by the end of this year? Or by year-end 2023?

Just a footnote: If you have the resources to give your 2022 gift now, it's an opportunity to put your funds to good use quickly. The sooner we receive your gift, the sooner we can evangelize and disciple the people of Europe.

In addition, if you'd like to consider giving a gift of appreciated assets, just check the box in section 4. Please give us a brief description and approximate value of your gift. We will follow up with you after the weekend is over.

It has been such a joy to be with all of you this weekend. We hope you've enjoyed some great worship, devotion time, and have formed some new friendships. Most of all we hope you've been inspired by the work God is allowing us to do in Europe. Were it not for His goodness and grace, none of the incredible projects, partnerships, and discipleship opportunities we've been a part of would be possible.

Now we invite you to spend some time in prayer and reflection on the things you've heard this weekend and consider how to invest in the opportunities before you. In the back of the room is a bowl where you can put your envelope.

Please take the time to prayerfully consider your decision. We know you'll want to think through your personal stewardship with Greater Europe Mission. I hope you can see that there really is no greater moment than now.

*[Close by welcoming Peer Ask Presenters to stage.]*