

Alicia Adams
December 18, 2007

Update from Bremen

Dear family and friends,

Warm greetings from cold and windy Bremen! I hope you are well and were not affected by the storms that spanned the country last week.

It turns out that I will be in the States for Christmas. This has been a very recent, last-minute development. I had assumed that I would be in Bremen, but my dad out of the blue offered to buy me a plane ticket, mainly so that I can have a chance to visit my grandfather, who is not doing well. In September he was diagnosed with two diseases: MDS, which prevents the bone marrow from producing healthy new blood cells; and systemic mastocytosis, which causes a build up of mast cells (they produce histamine and other chemicals) in the bone marrow and other organs of the body. Mastocytosis is considered a rare disorder, so there aren't too many proven ways of treating it. MDS can be treated with chemotherapy, which my grandpa has begun, but the disease can eventually turn into leukemia. Grandpa has had numerous blood transfusions and is always tired. When my parents visited my grandparents the day after Thanksgiving, they said he looked like he's aged 5 years since the summer. Apparently my grandmother is having trouble dealing with the situation, and she isn't sleeping much. Neither of them are Christians, which complicates the situation. My dad has tried to share the Gospel with them before, and hopefully we can talk with them over the holidays again.

After discussing with Elsa and a few others at church the option of visiting the U.S. and despite feeling guilty about "abandoning my post," I decided to take my dad up on his offer. If my grandfather were to die in the next year and I didn't take this opportunity to see him, I know I would not be happy with myself. If he were a Christian and had the hope of eternity like Jim had, I think I would be more at peace.

So, I've been running around the past couple days trying to get ready to leave on Thursday the 20th. I'll come back to Germany on the 30th.

Besides all of that, a lot has happened since my last email. I've been helping Elsa with general organization and weeding of Jim's books. It's like a treasure hunt because you never know what surprising thing you'll find next. "The Gospel Advocate" dating back to 1943, "Firm Foundation" dating back to the 60s, etc. Mark has agreed to help me go through the Bible and theology books and decide which ones would be good for the church library we're planning to set up.

On January 8th I'm scheduled to teach a ladies' Bible study at church. It will be just one lesson, but this is the first time I've ever taught an adult class, let alone one in German. I'm rather nervous about it, but I guess Elsa has confidence in my language skills or she wouldn't have asked me to do it.

I'm also on the planning committee for the German and Swiss ladies' retreat in Neckarzimmern next May. It is Bremen's turn to plan it, and so far things are coming together nicely. Our theme will be "Your will be done." I'm still participating in the weekly ladies' Bible study, meeting with Jutta once a week, and having a small group Bible study with Ingrid and Michaela every other week. We're almost finished with the book of James and will begin Malachi in January. It's been a great chance for us to get to know each other better and encourage each other spiritually.

The decision has been made that we will host a Harding University campaign next summer. Chuck Hicks will come with a group of students next May for five weeks. We haven't worked out too many details yet, but I know that will pick up in the next couple of months. I think it will be interesting to be involved with a campaign from this side after having first come to Bremen as a student member of a campaign group.

Also in the spring I plan to participate in ETM (Evangelism Training and Media), the training course Jim designed and taught. He and Elsa had encouraged me to sign up for the October course, but when Jim got sick the course was canceled. I'm happy to report that Elsa and a team of four others have made plans to continue ETM with support from congregations in the States. I look forward to taking part in this program. Liesel, a woman from the congregation here, also plans to take the spring course, and I think it will be a great chance

for me to get to know her better. Now, if I can just get through the application form....That's a test of my German skills if there ever was one!

Many people have asked about how Elsa's been doing since Jim's death. Thank you so much for your prayers on her behalf! I've spent a lot of time with her over the past two months, and I can confidently say she's doing well. She of course has her low moments, but she will tell you that never before has she felt so surrounded by love as she does right now. She's told me that my working at her house has been beneficial for her as well, as she's not alone all the time. It's also been a good chance for me to form a closer bond with Elsa. While Elsa was very much involved in the process, a lot of my work over the past year was with and through Jim, so now I've been able to work directly with Elsa and get to know her better, which I've enjoyed. Also helping Elsa is the fact that her daughter, Karin, and her family will be in Bremen for Christmas. Then in January Elsa will travel to the States to visit her new grandson...and naturally Diana and the rest of the family as well.

The congregation is doing well overall. The men seem to be adapting to new leadership roles, and just about everyone is doing a good job of being patient with one another. So far no Sunday service has been without a preacher, and arrangements have been made to cover all Bible classes. It's been great to see different men branching out and serving in new roles.

We've been excited to have Simone visiting the congregation lately. She works with Rüdiger and approached him with questions about the Bible. She's been reading through the Bible (yes, the whole thing) for a while now, and around the time Jim died she came to church one Sunday with Rüdiger's family. She chose to come once a month because she lives so far away, but she missed coming so much that she decided to make the trip each week. To get to the church building she travels 1.5 hours by car, train, and two streetcars, and she says she spends the whole week looking forward to Sunday. Her budding faith and excitement are encouraging to us all. Please be praying for her as she continues to read the Bible and is beginning Bible studies with Elsa.

On a personal note, please be praying for my grandfather, as well as for my Uncle Andy. He had a heart attack (his second in three years) about three weeks ago. About a week later he was rushed into surgery to remove dead tissue from the site of a staph infection in his leg. The doctors then had to graft in skin, muscle, and part of the femoral artery from the other leg. He is now in the hospital yet again after having what the doctors believe was a seizure on Sunday. He is turning 50 this month. He's had a rough few weeks and could really use some prayers for healing and strength.

I told you a lot's been happening around here! It's been a time of great blessing, though, despite the struggles.

I pray you are doing well and that you have a great Christmas with family and friends. God is good, and I look forward to seeing what He has in store for 2008.

Gott mit Euch,
Alicia