

Last edited August 21, 2015

A History of the Eifel Fellowship

By Hanna and George Miley

In the summer of 2000 we once again visited the Eifel. Within minutes of arriving in Gemünd, Hanna's home town, we began to meet people who had known Hanna and her family in the 1930s. Hanna and her parents, Amalie and Markus Zack, were Jewish. Toward the end of our stay, we felt God saying that we were to return to Gemünd the next summer and spend a month.

During the summer of 2001 we prayed in each place in Gemünd that held painful memories for Hanna. The Zack family home had been in the center of town on the Dreibornerstraße. In the playground of the Protestant school, right across from the Protestant church on Alte Bahnhofstraße, Hanna and the other Jewish children had been threatened. We prayed in the Jewish cemetery. A memorial stone is there for Kurt Meier, Hanna's childhood friend. Kurt was deported to Theresienstadt on July 27, 1942, and then to Auschwitz where his life was taken. We went to the cinema where Hanna and her friend Ruth had been denied entrance to see "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." No Jews allowed! We prayed where the Jewish synagogue had stood. Hanna remembers walking there holding her father's hand. The Zacks were in Gemünd on Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938, when the synagogue was burned to the ground and Jewish homes and businesses were vandalized.

We invited Jesus to enter each space with his redeeming Presence and to dispel the darkness. In prayer, healing went deeper. Hanna began to pray prayers of blessing. "Come, Lord Jesus, with your justice, your righteousness, your healing. Redeem the past. Manifest your kingdom. Bless Gemünd and the Eifel."

A Jewish follower of the Jewish Messiah had returned in fulfillment of God's calling to her people Israel—to bless the Gentiles (Genesis 12:3). In prayer, we felt God directing us to return to the Eifel the next summer and bring intercessors.

When we returned to Gemünd in the summer of 2002 eighteen friends from three different countries came with us. We spent our days praying for Gemünd and the Eifel. German brothers and sisters joined us. Thus began five summers of prayer days in the Eifel—2002 through 2006.

In the summer of 2003, as part of the prayer days, we received permission to erect a memorial stone in the Jewish cemetery to remember and honor Amalie and Markus, Hanna's parents. German friends were significant in helping with this.

During the winter of 2005 a group of 25 missionaries from a church in Monterrey, Mexico, joined us in Gemünd for a retreat lasting several days. There were participants from Mexico, Spain, Italy, Germany and the US. Hanna led the group on a walking tour around Gemünd which ended at the Jewish cemetery. As the

group prayed before the stone honoring Hanna's parents, a German couple approached Hanna and asked for forgiveness. Then came a Spaniard, then an Italian, then a Mexican and finally an American. It was a forerunner of many acts of forgiveness and reconciliation that have taken place in front of that stone.

Welcoming visitors to Gemünd from the Eifel, other parts of Germany, and foreign countries became an integral part of our activities.

After the prayer days during the summer of 2006 we felt the Lord leading into the next phase of the ministry. During a week of retreat in the Black Forest region we recorded what we felt He was saying. The document *Our Sense of God's Next Steps in the Eifel* includes:

- Return to the land of your fathers.... I will be with you. (Genesis 31:3)
- This work is to be an Isaac; do not give birth to an Ishmael. (Genesis 17:18-19)
- Prepare the way for the Lord. (Matthew 3:3)
- Restore the Ancient Anointings. (Isaiah 58:12)
- I have given you the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18)

So we rented an apartment in the Eifel village of Dahlem and began to live there 4-6 months a year. We continued to pray for God to bless the Eifel. We invested in relationships with Germans living around us. We asked God for a grassroots movement of spiritual renewal.

In 2009 we were honored to be invited by a group of German Christian leaders to accompany them on a visit to Auschwitz. They wanted to have Jewish followers of Jesus with them. The experience drew us all very close together. The group shared communion at the entrance to one of the partially destroyed gas chambers.

Hanna discovered that her parents had been gassed in the death camp in Chelmno, Poland, on May 3, 1942. She decided she wanted to retrace their steps from Gemünd to Cologne, then by train from Cologne to the Lodz ghetto where they had been held for six months, and then on to Chelmno. Eight friends accompanied us on a trip that brought us to Chelmno on May 3, 2010. One was an Austrian whose father had been a leading Nazi. Another was a German friend of many years. They wept together with Hanna at the spot where Jews had been forced into grey trucks to be gassed. Hanna prayed the Jewish mourners Kaddish at the incinerator in the forest where her parents' bodies had been burned.

On November 9, 2011, the anniversary of Kristallnacht, German friends in Gemünd planned a "Way of Remembrance" to acknowledge publicly the burning of synagogues and attacks on Jewish property and businesses that took place during this night in 1938. Hanna was asked if the evening could be organized around events in her life. That October posters began to appear in shops all along the Dreibornerstraße featuring a photo of Hanna and her mother. On the evening of November 9 Hanna spoke in a public meeting located no more than a stone's throw from the place where she and her parents had lived up until the end of 1938.

Hanna ended her talk that evening with these words:

You may be asking the question, "Why would she return to Gemünd?" I keep coming back here because the God of Israel has been teaching me about the power of forgiveness. I am still a Jew. I am a Jew who is a follower of Jesus, our Messiah.

The next day we walked together once again down Dreibornerstrasse as we had done so often before. It felt like something foundational in the spiritual atmosphere had changed.

In September, 2012, we were invited to visit Slovakia. Slovakian friends were planning actions of repentance for the deportation of Slovakian Jews to the concentration camps in 1942. Hanna was asked to share her testimony with local students. Some 1,500 attended meetings during the week that she spoke. The mayor was involved, along with church leaders, a member of the European Parliament, and Jewish representatives from Israel. What God had begun in the Eifel was spilling over in ways far beyond our doing.

In October, 2012, we participated in the first gathering of the Wittenberg 2017 initiative in Ottmaring, Germany. Wittenberg 2017 is an international, ecumenical, movement of prayer, confession and repentance, asking the Lord to heal the divisions among the followers of Jesus. Heart oneness among the Christian traditions has become of central importance for us, also in the Eifel.

In 2013 Gemünd celebrated its 800th anniversary. The organizing committee asked Hanna to serve as the honorary patron for the celebrations. The focus was to remember and honor the former Jewish citizens of Gemünd. On June 23 Hanna spoke to a full house in the Kursaal in Gemünd, along with the mayor, rabbi from Aachen, Catholic priest, Protestant pastor, and other dignitaries.

One week later, on July 1, 2013, the first Stolpersteins were laid in Gemünd. These are square, brass markers laid in the sidewalks in front of the former homes of victims of the Holocaust to remember and honor them. Hanna watched as Stolpersteins were laid for her parents and uncle. This was another public acknowledgement of a dark time in history that brought healing and blessing.

We met with friends and reflected on events of the previous week. When prayer for Gemünd and the Eifel began in 2001, we could have never imagined all that God was going to do. It was very clear to us that we had witnessed powerful answers to prayer. "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory..." (Psalm 115:1)

As 2013 ended, Hanna's autobiography *A Garland for Ashes* was published in English.

In September 2014 Hanna's autobiography was published in the German language by Fontis Verlag as *Meine Krone in der Asche*. She did her first public reading in Germany in Gemünd as over forty friends gathered to celebrate George's birthday.

In 2015 the Eifel Fellowship website www.EifelFellowship.com was launched.