Thousands of firefighters from 40 nations descended on Liverpool, England, for the 10th World Firefighters Games. Firefighters For Christ has been a strong supporter of this spirited competition since the First Games, which were held in Auckland, New Zealand in 1990. The latest 10-day festival of sport and camaraderie took place between August 24 and September 2, 2008. On scene was FFFC Northern Ireland to encourage firefighters to live their lives for Jesus Christ.

Faithful Paul Steusel once again represented Firefighters For Christ, International at the World Firefighters Games in Liverpool this summer.
God’s Ministry Around the World

There is a movement of the Lord around the world and Firefighters For Christ International is uniquely positioned to be used by God in this mighty work. From the very beginning, Firefighters For Christ has been an organization with an international vision. FFC has had active chapters in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Outreaches in Mexico, Central America, Russia, and other nations, have enabled FFC teams to take the message of the gospel all over the earth. Recently, FFC has partnered with firefighters in Northern Ireland for several outreach activities on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

In the area of Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, there has been an active group of Christian firefighters since 1989. In 2002, they officially became a part of Firefighters For Christ. Firefighters from several departments from around the Vancouver area attend regular FFC meetings.

Carl Ens, of the Surrey, B.C. Fire Department, heads the local FFC Chapter. He says the chapter has developed a much more global vision for their ministry. Several major international events are planned for the Vancouver region, including the 2009 World Police & Fire Games and the 2010 Winter Olympics. The Chapter is planning a September 11, 2008, outreach event that will invite local firefighters and their spouses to hear FFC FDNY members share their testimonies. This is new ground for the Surrey Chapter. “In the past, we have stayed pretty much inward focused in relation to our ministry,” Ens remarked. “But God has been moving and opening our eyes to ‘God-sized’ opportunities.”

Ens says the Surrey Chapter has used prayer as its principle-bonding agent. “It is the easiest way to bring everyone together,” he said. “As we step up to be lights for Christ in our fire halls, the ability to offer prayer for fellow firefighters, who are going through tough circumstances, is simple, yet, so powerful. We have seen God use these opportunities to minister to members and their families.”

It is the ‘stepping up’ that has the Surrey FFC Chapter energized for the future, but admittedly they are a little nervous. “It has been a struggle getting past our own hesitations and having faith that this is God’s event and that we just need to be obedient to His calling,” Ens recently commented. “We were on the fence not knowing if this event could happen. We have never ‘stepped up’ and put on an event like this.’”

God used a recent FFC couples’ BBQ in Surrey to spark the Chapter’s enthusiasm and confirm its vision for the future. FFC President, John White, traveled to Canada and attended the BBQ, where he gave a timely challenge as to the purpose of Christians in the fire department. Ens said, “By the end of the evening God had spoken very clearly to us. We have seen God use these opportunities to minister to members and their families.”

“God sized opportunities”}

PAGE 2
These Canadian firefighters show off their Psalm 91 bandanas, which came all the way from the Lone Star State of Texas. Pray for them as they partner with FFC FDNY in a local 9/11 outreach.

For 14 years, Ens and his wife Julie have been involved in soccer/football camps to present the gospel. Using soccer as the activity, children ages 5-10 are invited to take part in a “fun focused” soccer/Bible camp. Kids are taught the basics of soccer, and then in the middle of the camp they go inside to sing songs and hear a spiritual lesson. As the week progresses, the campers hear a very clear gospel presentation and are given opportunities to receive the gift of salvation.

“Soccer Sunday” is the Sunday following camp, where all the campers’ families are invited to come for a celebration of the past week’s camp. Everyone is invited for a big picnic, giving the camp workers opportunities to connect with families and encourage them about what a great child they have! Over the years, hundreds of children have come to the Lord, and, from one child, whole families have turned their lives to God. This ministry has taken Carl and Julie and their children to England, Venezuela, and several cities throughout British Columbia.

As the Surrey Chapter steps up and answers the call put before it by the Lord, they do so with faith and with examples from within their midst. Reo Jerome, a Captain working 25 years with the Surrey Fire Department, ventured out this summer on a three-week trip to Zambia in Africa. His task was to help construct housing for workers at the Village of Hope, an orphanage that houses 160 children, who are victims of the AIDS epidemic. He traveled with a boxful of New Testaments, prepared to minister to fellow firefighters.

These experiences help Ens and Jerome serve as examples by reaching out in practical life-giving ways to serve others and allow God to move into the hearts of people in a variety of settings. As the Surrey Chapter prepares for the opportunities that lie ahead to impact the Kingdom of God, they will be “stepping up” onto an international stage and forwarding the gospel by faithfully answering the call that has been put before them.
This is the essence of what Robert Blair, Northern Ireland’s FFC leader, said in a recent phone call to Firefighters For Christ, International. “As firefighters, we are rescuers. What we do in the natural, we also need to do in the spiritual.” Robert elaborated his thoughts in an e-mail to FFC.

The vision of Firefighters For Christ is to reach firefighters worldwide with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our mission goal is to encourage firefighters to live their lives for Jesus Christ. This is an awesome call. In the first few years of my involvement in FFC’s ministry, I never really grasped the reality of these powerful statements. They were someone else’s vision and mission goal and were mine only by inheritance.

God has changed my heart, though, and after much prayer, thought, and talking with others, the Lord has told me that Firefighters For Christ’s vision will outlast me. I’ve taken ownership of this vision and it’s now firm in my mind and heart.

I am a firefighter in Northern Ireland. It’s not a large country, by any means. We have approximately 1.7 million people and a fire and rescue service of around 2,000 employees spread around the country. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom with approximately 55,000 firefighters. I asked the Lord, “Is this my mission field? Tell me where to start. How on earth can I reach these people in the UK, never mind the whole world?”

I’ve learned over the years that my mission starts with one firefighter at a time. Wherever I am, whomever I am with, God gives me opportunities to encourage firefighters to live their lives for Jesus Christ. It doesn’t have to be at a meeting or a special event. A simple phone call, a God-arranged ‘chance’ meeting on the street, a fire call, time over coffee or at the back of the fire engine can all be divine appointments. All that is required of me is my time, my commitment to God, and to His vision for Firefighters For Christ.

FFFC has seen me through many hard times and also some wonderful triumphs. I can never repay or even measure what my family and I have been given. The love, encouragement, accountability and correction have encouraged me to live my life for Jesus Christ. I am humbled to be a part of a ministry, where the people in it just continue to give, love, and encourage, regardless of their own circumstances.

When I first got involved in the ministry, I never thought that I would see FFC teams from Northern Ireland go to Sheffield, Hong Kong, and Fresno, on mission work. I never dreamed that I would be standing at the International Breakfast in California sharing about missions to Northern Ireland. To date, we have had three missions. Mission Possible is being planned at the present for May 16-25, 2009.

Driver Robert Blair gets a push from USA FFC members. Robert’s warning: “When you come to Northern Ireland, plan to work!”

Sometimes I forget that our time here on earth is short. The battle seems long and my concern is that we equip and train the next generation to carry on the vision of Firefighters For Christ. Recently, FFFC NI appointed Gerald Titmus as FFFC Chaplain. Gerald has worked closely with FFFC since 2003 and this is a natural development in God’s plan for him and the ministry. Ken Dyer, President of FFFC UK, and his wife, Morwen, joined us for Gerald’s commissioning service. John and Jane White were also in attendance for this momentous occasion.

A few days ago, out of the blue, I received an e-mail from a Christian firefighter in Germany. He had been meeting with a group of Christian firefighters for a prayer breakfast once a month. Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Maybe I can’t reach a lot of firefighters in Germany but I can encourage this dear brother and his group to live their lives for Jesus Christ. Pray for Steffen and the group in Stuttgart City Fire Department, Germany. If we all are living our lives for Jesus, then the people we work with will know Jesus is in us and the vision of Firefighters For Christ will be fulfilled.

“If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will.”

MOTHER THERESA
Steffen Schwarz heard about Firefighters For Christ three years ago. He said, “FFC is a huge encouragement for the vision to start something like this in Germany. Our goals are the same — to encourage others to live their faith in the firehouses and to reach other firefighters with the gospel.”

“We started a prayer chain two years ago at my fire department. Five months ago, some more contacts were built around Christian firefighters in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. We want Christian firefighters to know that they are not alone. Our hope is that all of us will pray for the spiritual needs of our colleagues, our firehouses, and that we will get active and start sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with a heart of love for our fellow firefighters. Please pray for God’s guidance and wisdom in every decision, for Christian firefighters with a heart for this ministry, who will pray and help in practical ways to establish this work. Pray for open doors and open hearts at our firehouses. There is a huge need for Jesus among the firefighters in Germany.”

German firefighter, Steffen Schwarz, of the City of Stuttgart FD, and his fiancé, Tanja, plan to be married in September. They took this picture at an old ruin with the words of Psalm 111:2 between them. “The works of the LORD are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them.” Steffen wrote, “This symbolizes that the LORD is in our midst and we are not an engagement of two, but instead, an engagement of three. Jesus is our Rock and foundation.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.firefightersforchrist.org

FFC’s Vancouver, Washington Chapter members recently rode to a fellowship breakfast on their 911 special edition Harleys, which are sold only to firefighters. They, too, received Psalm 91 bandanas from people in Garland, Texas, who pray for their safety.
We’re praying that each FFC chapter will send their leaders, members, and next-generation firefighters to this exciting four-day event, beginning Thursday, March 26th and concluding Sunday, March 29th.

If you are coming from another country or out of state, we would like to provide free housing for you in firefighter’s homes at Hume Lake. We’ll be reserving spaces on a first-come, first-serve basis, so e-mail johnwhite@firefightersforchrist.org to request your place.

Go to www.firefightersforchrist.org and click on our link to Hume Lake Conference to read details concerning registration and cost of program/meals and/or lodging.

You will need to make your reservations and pay for meals/program and/or lodging through Hume Lake Christian Camps. Call toll free @ 800.965.HUME (4863) or if you are out of the USA, e-mail Elizabeth Peet at epeet@humelake.org to make your reservations.
A welcome reception will take place at Hume’s snack shop at 3:00 PM on Thursday. At 6 p.m., our first scrumptious meal will be served at Hume’s Ponderosa dining hall. After dinner, the fun begins as firefighters’ beloved Eric Simpson commences his humorous antics. We’ll meet at Meadow Ranch’s Chapel, where FFC Chapter leaders and others will share their hearts and ministries. It’s a time to get acquainted, make new friends, and be encouraged to live your lives for Jesus Christ.

Friday morning, the men will meet with Pete McKenzie. Many men commented that their time with Pete at FFC’s 2008 International Weekend was life changing. The ladies will also have a special gathering Friday morning. After lunch, the time is open to enjoy Hume’s awesome recreation or to get some rest. Friday night, Hume’s traditional conference will begin and continue on Saturday morning with their outstanding speaker, Ken Hutcherson, and various breakout sessions designed for firefighters. More fun activities will be available during free time on Saturday afternoon. After dinner, we’ll hear Hume’s speaker and return to Meadow Ranch Chapel to have a close time of sharing, praise and prayer. Hume’s Sunday morning service is one you won’t want to miss.
I had just lay down to go to sleep and finished wonderful intimate prayer with God. I lay there feeling so good in my heart and I started wondering why I suddenly, after a totally long day, was feeling great. I was stunned and unsure why my heart felt so good. I mean, really, I have brain cancer — that thing, which is known and respected as bad.

I then thought that some brain cancer patients still remain around on a blessing and miracle of God. They must be here for a special reason, completing that special role given to them by God Himself. And then it hit me, something amazing. My role, that thing for me, was simply to change my outlook on life and all of life’s events.

The biggest miracle in my life has simply been to change how I see the important things. For example, before this horrific thing attached itself to me, I was a “B” father. I was working hard to complete the important activities and yet not working to give emotions and energy to help my family grow. I am amazed that the relationship between Hunter and me has totally changed over these last seven months. To grab that boy and tightly hug him with love and emotion every single time has been the best thing that has ever happened. To hold him in my arms and let that joy transfer every single time is fantastic. And what is so great, and horrific, is that this would have never happened to me without accepting the limitations of the cancer.

I look at the comparison of the two lifestyles and realize that the boy raised by me in my previous endeavor without any changes would have fallen short. Hunter is now a boy that is allowed to have some amazing years with my new gift. My potential years of shortened time are here to allow me to work with him on the most important, compared to the many years of being with him before.

I rose in bed to realize that over the course of this whole thing I have been given a potential curse of brain cancer and got the miracle of realizing how to become an “A” father. I know that this sounds ridiculous, but I am so thankful to have been given such a miracle. I recognize that this might be hard for others to have that moment, that event, or that life-changing thing to help them realize the benefits of that shift. It’s a shift from the old to the new. I can only tell you how great is has been to enjoy what that shift has given to Hunter, me and to my wife Hallie. Again, thank you God for such a wonderful miracle.

Please pray for this wonderful family. The Lord is blessing their lives with His awesome presence!

Eric Botkin is a Riverside City firefighter, whose son loves baseball. Dad, Mom and Hunter were blessed to fly to NYC to see the Yankees play. “The Lord’s delight is in those who honor Him, those who put their hope in His unfailing love.” Psalm 147:11

Jose and Bev Medrano are one of Firefighters For Christ’s dearest couples. Their lives in Christ bless each of us. For seventeen years, Jose has served on FFC’s International Ministry Team. He also has been FFC’s Executive Director. Recently, the Lord led Jose to step down from his responsibilities with FFC in order for Bev and him to devote more time to their ministry of strengthening marriages. He and Bev are coaches at their sons’ school and the passion of their heart is to minister to families. We at FFC International thank the Lord for giving us Jose and Bev. We look forward to watching the Lord use them more and more for His praise and glory!

Amazing!

By Eric Botkin

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