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The Fountain of Tears and the House of Prayer

This is going to be a combination of Newsletter and Building Update, and as usual with these combo-newsletters, I'll put the Building Update at the end.

We've seen some major transformation inside the Prayer House since we last wrote. It looks different now that the plaster is on the walls and ceilings. I love the word TRANSFORMATION. This is a HOUSE of TRANSFORMATION. I declared that the other day – it just came out of my mouth. God is in the business of transformation, especially here in Auschwitz-Birkenau.

We've just had a wonderful weekend at the Fountain of Tears. It was a weekend with many friends who have walked with Rick and Dafna over the years, especially here in Auschwitz-Birkenau. So many good things were shared, so much insight and revelation. We personally were reminded of how God led each of us here, how different our journeys have been, and yet how beautifully the Prayer House and the Fountain of Tears fit together.

If you don't know about the Fountain of Tears, it's described as a, "Sculptured dialogue of suffering between the Holocaust and the Crucifixion". Seven sculptured relief panels reflecting the last seven words from the crucifixion... Seven life size bronze figures symbolizing the response and reflection of the Holocaust.... Six pillars of stone for a memorial to the six million who perished. See https://fountainoftears.org/

For those who've not visited us before, our house lies directly opposite the Fountain of Tears. We face each other across the dirt road that the Nazi's built, the road that connected the first Selection Point to the gates of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Around 700,000 Jews would have walked along this road, most of them to their deaths. Today we see individuals and groups, many of them Jews, walk along this road into the camp – to remember those who walked this path before.

We've had many words about the relationship between the House of Prayer and the Fountain of Tears. Two people holding hands across the road, a horse and carriage (don't ask me who's the horse or who's the carriage), a bridge over the road, a wedding "chuppah" stretched over the road. Before the Nazis built that road, our house and the FOT would have been one plot of land. The plot was divided by the Nazi "death road" and now it's been reconnected to release LIFE.

Over the weekend, as I was looking at the Fountain, I had this feeling that those last 7 words that Jesus spoke on the cross, represented by the 7 sculptured panels, are sending out a sound over the camp. They are declaring something in the spirit realm, something powerful. Each word is important. Each word has a particular significance.



The sixth panel - "It is finished"

The first panel is, "**Father, forgive them for they do not know not what they do**". What does that declaration do in a place like Auschwitz-Birkenau??? For God, forgiveness is a very big deal indeed. With this word Jesus established a COVENANT of forgiveness, "I will FORGIVE their iniquity, and their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more". (Jeremiah 31:34). This is an AMAZING truth and we need to let it sink in. Has God really FORGOTTEN ALL of my sin??

The fourth panel is HUGE, "**My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?**". This is the deepest place of identification between the crucifixion and the Holocaust. We are told that many prisoners were quoting this from Psalm 22 when they were walking into the gas chambers. Hebrews 4 talks about our compassionate High Priest, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but in ALL THINGS was tempted as we are, yet without sin." Whatever the Jews went through in Auschwitz-Birkenau, He went through it too.

The sixth panel is a declaration, "**It is finished!**". I took a small group of English people around the Fountain who knew absolutely nothing about Jesus or the Bible, so I had to explain everything. It was great. You can really share some good news about Jesus when you're walking around the Fountain! When I came to this panel, I got the obvious question, "What's finished?". And I explained that Jesus paid the price for my sin, their sin, EVERYBODY'S sin. The work was done. It is finished!

John says, "He is the sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the WHOLE world". This word is being declared over the camp. Jesus paid the price for the sins of the Holocaust. That's why He can redeem it. He can transform this place of darkness and death into light and life.

I came across this verse the other day and the Holy Spirit spoke it directly into my spirit. It's from 2 Timothy 1. "But now it has been revealed through the appearing of our saviour Christ Jesus, who DESTROYED DEATH and brought LIFE and IMMORTALITY to LIGHT through the gospel." Wow. How powerful is that! It's all part of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

+++ SELAH +++

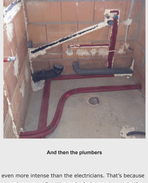
Now to the Building Update

It's been a busy time here in the Prayer House, not so much in terms of visitors, but in terms of building work.

Last time I mentioned the electricians. They drilled into the walls and embedded more than 2km of power cables into the walls, as well as every other kind of cable you can imagine. The red block-and-concrete walls were marked with white lines, patches of white cement, and small round orange holders for the switches and sockets. That was where we were 2 months ago.

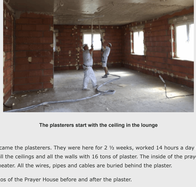


First the electricians



And then the plumbers

After the electricians came the plumbers. Their drilling was even more intense than the electricians. That's because the pipes are bigger. They embedded all the hot-and-cold water pipes, as well as the main drainage pipes, into the walls. Outside there's a huge pile of debris comprising all the bits of wall that have been dug out. The walls now had red insulated water pipes and grey and black drainage pipes in them.



The plasterers start with the ceiling in the lounge

After the plumbers came the plasterers. They were here for 2 ½ weeks, worked 14 hours a day (!!) from 7am to 9pm, and covered all the ceilings and all the walls with 16 tons of plaster. The inside of the prayer house now looks different, so much neater. All the wires, pipes and cables are buried behind the plaster.

Here are some photos of the Prayer House before and after the plaster.



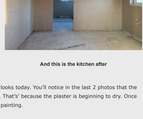
This was the basement before....



And this is the basement after



This was the kitchen before....



And this is the kitchen after

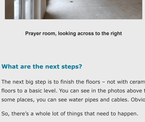
Finally, I'll close with some photos of the Prayer Room as it looks today. You'll notice in the last 2 photos that the walls are white at the bottom and creamy brown at the top. That's' because the plaster is beginning to dry. Once it's dry, the walls will look a lot lighter and will be ready for painting.



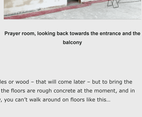
Prayer room looking out before....



And Prayer room after



Prayer room, looking across to the right



Prayer room, looking back towards the entrance and the balcony

What are the next steps?

The next big step is to finish the floors – not with ceramic tiles or wood – that will come later – but to bring the floors to a basic level. You can see in the photos above that the floors are rough concrete at the moment, and in some places, you can see water pipes and cables. Obviously, you can't walk around on floors like this..

So, there's a whole lot of things that need to happen.

First the builder has to put down different layers of insulating material, including 15cm of Styrofoam in the basement and 5cm of Styrofoam on the other 2 floors. Then the plumber will install around 3km of underfloor heating pipes in the basement and on the ground floor. And after that the builder will cover everything with 5cm of concrete. This will be done using a special machine to make sure the concrete is flat – it shouldn't vary by more than 2-3mm across the whole of the floor.

All this has to happen quickly, each stage immediately after the previous stage. You don't want to have people walking around on Styrofoam or heating pipes...

We've scheduled this to happen in August and September. It should take around 6 weeks. In the meantime, the ventilation supplier will install air ducts on the floors. These are stainless steel pipes that will circulate fresh air throughout the building.

I think that's enough for now.
We wish you a wonderful summer holiday season (whoops for those of you in the northern hemisphere!).

Love and blessings
Mark & Cathy

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