FRUIT THAT LASTS

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24, ESV). We couldn’t fully grasp the impact of that verse when our counselor read it to us in 2009. He was helping us decide whether to continue serving in Brazil or go to Portugal. His last question still resonates: “So, where will the grain of wheat die?” Now we understand that wherever the seed falls, it dies . . . and it bears fruit.

In February, we remembered that verse as we held our church’s first funeral service for a member of the Alliance congregation in Paredes, Portugal. Fernando was the first man baptized in our church. He and his wife were also the first graduates of the SEAN course, a discipleship program that equips believers to pass on what they have learned to others. Only 49 years old, Fernando had been homebound for two years because of a chronic illness. He passed his days reading Scripture and recorded his prayers on paper. His desire was to see his extended family come to faith. We prayed for his healing almost daily, and many other Alliance people prayed too.

On February 11, Fernando entered the Lord’s presence. We all sense his loss, particularly his wife and children. But his life, like a grain of wheat buried in the earth, is bearing much fruit. His funeral was a holy moment. Between 70–100 people came. Our pastoral team led the service, and the family chose the songs. Some who were present said it was as though we were in heaven.

We decided to hold a memorial service in our church one month after Fernando’s death, as is common here. That night the church was packed. The extended family came again. For most, it was the first time they had entered an evangelical church. Several believers shared about Fernando’s life, including the man who gave him his first New Testament, a pastor’s wife who met him in the hospital, and his wife and daughter, who read one of the prayers he wrote. Fernando’s prayer for his family to hear the gospel was answered. His funeral was our greatest opportunity for gospel proclamation since we arrived in Portugal. Pray for lasting Kingdom impact from Fernando’s testimony.

| by Mike and Ruth Davis, serving in Portugal

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Easter week was one for the books at ACF Church this year (Alliance Christian Fellowship of Eagle River, Alaska). A month before Easter, we began praying to see 50 people get baptized on Easter Sunday. This year, we planned to celebrate Christ’s Resurrection at Eagle River High School’s gymnasium.

God reminded us that our dreams are always too small. Instead of 50 people, we saw 105 believers get baptized between services, a 16-year-old girl and her mother suddenly showed up. They were watching online, and the daughter told her mom that she had to be baptized that day. So, they got in the car, and we baptized the teen between services.

We baptized mothers and fathers and their children. We saw friends embracing as they were baptized together. It was a taste of Acts 2 for sure. The gymnasium was so full that people were standing outside watching our livestream on their phones. There was no way our team could take credit for this. The following week, I told them, “We just witnessed a miracle.” Once again, I realized that our “moon shot” is never too hard for God.

Pray that all who were baptized will continue to live for Jesus, “rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as [they] were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Col. 2:7). Ask, too, for the fruit of the Spirit to be evident in their lives: “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23).

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Thanks to all who are praying for this heartbreaking situation. Because of your prayers, CAMA Services’ local partners have been able to distribute food, water, medicine, Christian literature, and other necessities in and around Kyiv. As Russian forces have left neighboring cities, CAMA’s partners have been making trips to hand out food packages and come alongside those in need. This has led to meeting the transportation needs of more internally displaced people and providing financial support to over 20 displaced families.

Beyond Kyiv and its surrounding areas, CAMA has partnered with the International Mental Health Consultants, a nongovernmental organization that has been training counselors in Ukraine to provide short- and long-term mental health services to Ukrainians currently experiencing trauma. Through this partnership, Ukrainian counselors are now supporting fellow Ukrainians who have been evacuated from places such as Bucha, Kharkiv, and Mariupol.

One of CAMA’s local partners said, “Our vehicles are constantly working here—bringing and taking people in and out, buying food, bringing water, [and] bringing humanitarian products.”

Thank you for your compassion for the people of Ukraine. Through the prayers and financial support of the Alliance family, Ukrainians have had others to lean on physically, mentally, and spiritually as they navigate this ongoing conflict. Please continue to pray for their well-being, safety, and peace.

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Thank you for praying for Alliance workers and for the people with whom they share the gospel.
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