

**The event:**

In 2013, while in Skopje, I believe the Lord gave me a vision—of an aqueduct carrying water all across the nations of Europe. The aqueduct was rooted in each nation by a supporting tower. The water symbolised the Holy Spirit and the awakening and renewal that God desires for our continent. The vision was the catalyst for praying, planning and preparing for ASK's first mainland European gathering, which brought together leaders from 9 nations apart from the UK, and members of ASK Network. The gathering was named **'I have called you friends'** from John 15, in the middle of Jesus last discourse or handover to his disciples, because of a sense that we could only begin to plant ASK there by inviting friends and co-labourers in the vast territory that is Europe.

**The Purpose:**

Our desire in holding this event was three-fold; to strengthen existing friendships; to forge new ones; to listen to each delegate from a different nation, and to pray and ASK both for their nation and for their personal situation and circumstances. It was also to 'build an altar to the Lord' and call upon him to 're-open the wells' that have long ago been stopped up by secularism, hedonism and humanism.

**The Place:**

We gathered in Ohrid, some two hours from Skopje, the capital of Macedonia. Ohrid is set on a beautiful lake of the same name. A deep friendship with Kosta & Nada Milkov (see below), coupled with Paul's arrival in about AD50 in Philippi (then in Macedonia) in response to Paul's vision of the man from Macedonia, and his primary instinct to seek out the place of prayer (Acts 16:13) made Macedonia the obvious choice of venue for this first mainland European gathering.

## **The People:**

### **Speakers:**

Elliott Tepper : founder director of Betel Ministries and based in Madrid.

Cristian Romocea from Romania, Global advocate for the Bible Society.

Andy Buckler, director of Missions & training for the EPUF (Eglise Protestante Unie de France)

Kosta Milkov, Director of the Balkan Institute of Faith & Culture and associate with Ravi Zacharias Ministries

Nada Milkova, Director of the BIFC and of Metanoja Publishing House

Nina Oskardottir, graduating ordinand in the church of Norway

Lena Harris, pastor-lecturer from Johannelund Theological College in Sweden

Sena Ounate-Lare, pastor in Normandy, France

Thierry & Christine Bourgeois, pastors in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sasha and Ksoosha Nikiforov, missionaries from Kaliningrad, Russia

Dave & Liz Percival, directors of the UK Marriage network, 2-in-2-1.

Charlie & Anita Cleverly, directors, ASK Europe.

Celia McAlpine, International co-founder & Director of ASK.



Other delegates were members of ASK and the majority of the UK team, Ruben Secen from Croatia, working for Youth for Christ, and Mirce & Nada Andreevi, pastors in Skopje, Rosie Critchlow, Director of Sentinel Group, UK.

Many more than 9 nations were in fact represented, because several delegates have double or triple nationality.

## **The programme:**

There were 8 sessions in all, leaving plenty of time for connecting at meal times and in the free afternoons. It was a joy to literally watch answers to our prayers about friendship being answered, as people sat deep in conversation around the tables.

Each session included prayer for the nation (s) in focus. There was a sense of intimacy right from the first session as we worshipped the Lord, feeling his presence and knowing a sense of safety.

There were a number of prophetic words given, with the common theme of water: a fountain watering Macedonia, a waterfall thundering down with cleansing, a river running though the lake with cleansing power.

There was much asking for the refugee tsunami currently coursing through Europe. Nada Milkova described her recent visit to refugee women and children on the Serbian border with Macedonia, showing us photos, which helped our understanding and compassion.

On Saturday afternoon we visited the Icon gallery in Ohrid, and were guided round the beautiful chapel by Kosta, who is an expert on icons, having done his doctorate on the Early Church Fathers.



### **First fruits.**

Much of the early fruit is evidenced in the above paragraphs. Other prayers made since the very beginning, were that the unity of which Jesus speaks in John 17 would be experienced, and that those gathered would meet the Lord and be encouraged in and for their callings. God generously answered both things asked for. Across a wide spectrum of theological opinion and conviction we enjoyed a genuinely sweet fellowship of unity in diversity. This is something to ask for and practise at all times and in all places...

One very specific fruit from this time is that through meeting Elliott Tepper, Thierry Bourgeois has been able to open a way for the addict relative of one of his church members to join the Betel community in Marseilles, France. This is the answer to years of sorrow and suffering for the family in question. It is a cause for great rejoicing.

We are asking and expecting much more fruit as the weeks and months pass.

### **An extra grace:**

David and Liz Percival were able to stay on for some holiday in Ohrid. Liz writes:

*We then spent two days in Skopje seeing the sites and visiting the Metanoia café and evangelical church where we were made most welcome. On Saturday, five people from the church in Skopje were baptised including Gabriela, Kosta and Nada Milkov's 17 year old daughter. A fleet of cars travelled out of Skopje up a picturesque canyon passing through Albanian Moslem villages to reach a beautiful section of the river called "the womb". We were privileged to give a lift to two Roman Catholic ladies, mother and daughter, one who works in public broadcasting and the other in Radio Maria, a Christian Internet broadcasting station, dear friends of the Milkov family, who wanted to support Gabriela.*

*A number of Gabriela's non-Christian friends were there, and Kosta spoke about Jesus and his saving power before each candidate waded out into the river to be immersed in the cold waters. It was very moving seeing each of them making a public commitment to Jesus and worshipping with them in the open air so close to Moslem villages.*



*Each candidate gave their testimony at church the following morning and after the service we were privileged to give a talk on marriage (ably translated by Kosta) to encourage a number of couples from the church. The church is continuing its work in supporting refugees including spending time clearing rubbish away in the camp to improve the conditions for them while also providing a practical Christian witness to the authorities whose resources are severely stretched.*

**Giving thanks:**

Special thanks to Jane Bradford for administering the gathering, to Lauren Harris for leading us in worship, and to Matthew Key for technical assistance.

We give thanks above all to God:

*Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Eph 3:20,21*

**PLEASE ASK:**

- For continued strength and encouragement for all those serving in the nation where God has called them. (Acts 17:26)
- For Romain, the young man at Betel, Marseilles.
- For whichever nation(s) in Europe God draws your heart to.
- For the sea of refugees crossing the continent...
- For the governments seeking solutions to the migrant/refugee crisis to collaborate peacefully and with wisdom.

Anita Cleverly  
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