

Dear all

The 2019 European Leadership Forum (ELF) was held from Saturday, 18 May through Thursday, 23 May in Wisła in southern Poland, near the border of the Czech Republic. All the meetings took place at the Gołębiowski Hotel, a modern conference complex, which also fed and housed all Forum participants (around 800 plus the volunteer team of around 150). The Hotel was originally intended to host the Communist Party Congress and it is ironic that the place where plans to oppress and suppress evangelical Christianity now houses the largest gathering of Evangelical Leaders in Europe. The Forum is an invitation-only congress aimed at spiritually mature evangelical leaders and is conducted in English.

My time there was spent first of all in a Pre-forum Conference for the group of European Pastors who were completing a Year Round Mentoring programme run by John Kirkpatrick (a Pastor from Northern Ireland), Jelena Sivulka (a Clinical Psychologist from Serbia) and me. This is the second such group that has finished the programme and it was an emotional time as we looked at 2 Timothy and considered relationships with problem people. Pray for the group that has finished as they continue to serve God in their own national contexts - often isolated and dealing with complex pastoral issues.

From the Sunday the Forum goes into full swing with Plenary sessions morning and night and also Network Sessions (there are 28 Networks ranging from Philosophers and Politicians to Counsellors and Church Planters), Post Luncheon Workshops and Afternoon Seminars. The smörgasbord of spiritual food is more bewildering than a Subway sandwich shop and can be overwhelming. The common experience of participants is to return home spiritually replete but physically exhausted.

My Network was new to me (I had co-led the Disciple-Making Leaders Network for a number of years with Mark Stirling) but the Bible Teachers and Preachers sessions gave me a real opportunity to co-learn with 40 others. My afternoon focus was on forming the new cohort of Pastors and we delivered a programme entitled 'Like a Tree Planted' (from Psalm 1:3). Please pray for these 11 Pastors as they return home after forming strong bonds with each other. Our Year Round programme will include 4 Webinars and a Retreat in December but also one-to-one sessions with either myself, John or Jelena. We believe that we are doing a work for God in sustaining front line servants in their calling.

There are two further important initiatives which I am committed to:

1. An **Effective Learning Forum**: this initiative, a play on the acronym ELF, is all about forming a learning context and strategy for the Forum. There are so many resources now available that there is a need to collate these into 'chunks' of learning. We need to focus away from 'teaching' and deliver a genuine learning experience. As we embark on a programme of setting learning outcomes for the 'curriculum' and also adapt delivery methods to allow greater engagement in learning. We want not only to teach but to see lives transformed through learning together. This work has far-reaching implications for the whole Forum and your prayers for wisdom and insight will be hugely appreciated. I met with the new Principal of Moorlands College, David Hilborn, and discovered we have a shared passion for learning. Please pray for him as he leads the College.
2. A Scotland and Northern Ireland Pastoral Support programme. I have shared a paper with a few colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland and also at the Forum on the sparsity of Pastoral Support for Pastors - some work is done within some denominations and also some Institutions and organisations provide development opportunities for Pastors to improve their skills but I share a concern with some others (notably Jim Turrent of Central Baptist Church in Dundee, Alistair Purss in Dumfries Baptist Church and John Kirkpatrick of Port Rush Presbyterian Church) that we need to do something in Scotland to help prevent attrition from Pastoral Ministry. This initiative would be focussed on Pastors in their humanity and vulnerability and would be non-denominational. It would also be focussed strongly on bonds of friendship and not on any institutional survival. This initiative is very much at the early stages but please pray that we will be able to develop something that meets a need, fills a gap and supports the Kingdom of God.

I am enormously grateful for the interest from the TCF Church Family in this work - I appreciate that I have been granted 2 - 3 development days each year (the rest being annual leave) and this year I particularly appreciate the very kind gift of £450 which I have used to defray the cost of attending and travel.



Jim