



THE ENCOURAGER

Let us never forget

March/April, 2009

“Let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

Volume 32, No. 2

To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery amongst the Gentiles: which is Christ in you the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.

With Colossians 1: 27 - 28. I send my greetings from Germany! My name is Steffen Schwarz and I am from the city of Stuttgart. If you have read the last **Encourager** you may have recognized my name. My friend Rob Hitt shared a couple of times about the vision to start a ministry like FCFI in Germany. Gay and Sue Reynolds asked me to share with you more about this vision.

In 2003 I started my career as a firefighter. Up to this point my life was wretched. So I tried to enhance my life with working as a firefighter and wearing a uniform. As you can imagine this was a bad plan. But I got through the tryouts and started in April 2003 at the fire academy. There I met a guy named Jörg. We started ride sharing and so Jörg and I had a lot of time to talk and share. He was the one who shared with me the Gospel and that I was living a sinful life. Five months later my life was at a turning point and through God's grace I became a Christian.

After finishing the academy in December 2004, I was assigned to Station 3, the headquarter. It was great to now be in the *real life* and answering the calls. My friend Jörg and I were assigned to the same station and shift! What a blessing to me to have a Christian beside me during my first steps as a Christian and as a firemen.

In March 2005 God showed me, through different circumstances, that I had to go to a six month international Bible school in September. What a shock for me! For me it was so awesome to work as a firemen I wondered how can God send me to a Bible school! I had never prayed about this! I didn't want to go. You must know, I'm really bad with sitting down and studying, memorizing and having one lecture after another. I had already signed a contract so that I could move into a new apartment in August and I had to buy a kitchen as well for this apartment. So how can I pay to attend a Bible school? At work I had to do different advanced training with different check-ups. I needed more than those five months left to study and learn for this check-ups. I was assigned to this station only three months. How can I tell my captain I'm going to leave for six months? Another main concern was that the last time I spoke English was years ago. So as you see there was more than one reason to say: *I not only want to go, I can't go!*

I started praying and God changed my heart and my mind. I prayed that if it means I have to quit my dream job to obey God's will, then I want to trust Him that HE provides everything for me during and especially for the time after Bible school. And He did!

I talked to my captain and he supported me in a way that I could leave and come back to the fire department after Bible school. But more

MEET A MEMBER



**Steffen Schwarz
Firefighter & Rescue Diver
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Department**

than that: I didn't have to take unpaid leave. I got the chance to take my (paid) vacation time from two years plus and do the time left as missing hours.

I made it through those check-ups and God provided my maintenance expenses for the apartment I moved in to before Bible school started.

This whole situation was a huge thing for my young Christian life and it also impacted some of my colleagues. They couldn't believe that I would do all this to attend Bible school. So they started asking about our faith.

In September 2005, I drove down to the Lake Constance where the Torchbearer Bible School called *Bodensee* is located. I arrived and was one of 100 students from all over the world. Most were North Americans 18-20 years old. I was 26 at that time. I lived in a ten-person room with nine other guys from Africa, Philippines, USA, Canada and Taiwan. What a difference after living in my own apartment! During those six months I learned a lot. It was a blessed time. God showed me His plan was to send me back to the fire department and not to another missionary field like Africa. The fire service is my *mission-field!*

After returning to the fire department in 2006, I started a prayer campaign amongst Christians from the City of Stuttgart Fire Department. I wanted to build the foundation with prayer. In the meantime we had our first prayer-breakfasts and contacts to other

Christians at the fire service were made.

It may sound like I had an easy and blessed way. And yes, it was blessed. But it was and is not easy. Many times I sat at home full of doubts, wondering why God choose me — the youngest Christian with less skills and knowledge — to start a ministry like this. I had times where I wanted to quit this vision and just do it like others and be a *normal* Christian who goes to church every Sunday with the appearance of a good life without having a burden on my heart. But honestly, the more I had thoughts like this, the more it became clear how selfish I was. I want to rescue as many lives as I can working as a firefighter. I work hard and train hard to be equipped for this job. But on the other side I don't want to forget an important part. As a friend said: *“As firefighter we are rescuers. What we do in natural we also need to do in spiritual.”* And so it became more and more clear that it is not about me — it is about Christ Jesus in me, the hope of Glory! Or writing it down in a different way: Jesus Christ is the only hope to get glory out of me! What a freeing experience for me! What a pressure this was thinking it all depended on me and how I managed the whole situation. No, it is not depending on me or depending on you!

I don't know in which situation you are right now. Maybe you are leading a chapter or maybe you plan a event to present Christ to others from the fire service and you have a hard time doing this, then always remember Colossians 1:27

Christ in you, the hope of Glory!“

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WE HAVE HAD SEVERAL INQUIRES REGARDING MEMBERSHIP STATEMENTS. WE INCLUDE YOUR DUES DUE DATE ON THE TOP OF YOUR LABEL IN AN EFFORT TO AVOID THE COST OF SENDING OUT REMINDERS.

THOSE WHO RECIEVE IT BY E-MAIL, WE SEND REMINDERS OCCASIONALLY.

IF YOU GET AN ENVELOPE IN YOUR ENCOURAGER YOUR DUES ARE DUE.

Welcome

God is on The Move and several new chapters in the process of forming.

We just received a charter for

The Big Sky Fire/EMS Chapter: MT

President Joel Kelm (JOELKELM@msn.com; 406-585--2653 has been in contact with us as well as with Raul Angulo. The Vice President is Les Anderson and others are in the process of sending in their memberships

PRAYER CHAIN

*Want to be apart of the prayer chain?
Send your requests to Mike Gurr at*

FCFINTPRAYER@YAHOO.COM

CONFERENCES: 2009

- + FDIC, INDIANAPOLIS, IN: APRIL 20-25
- + I-CHIEFS, DALLAS, TX: AUGUST 27-29
- + FIREHOUSE CENTRAL EMS: ATLANTA, GA OCT. 26-30

NEW JERSEY CONFERENCES

- + NJ STATE FIREMEN'S - WILDWOOD, NJ SEPT. 11-12,
- + NJ STATE RELIEF ASSOC. - WEST PATTERSON, JULY 18,
- + 49TH ANNUAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES CONVENTION - HAWTHORNE, NJ OCTOBER 23 - 24



**International Board and Directors
Present at 2008 Annual Meeting**

Directors: Dennis Foshe: MO; Tye Prange: TX; Intern'l Board: Lee Callahan Russ Stammer, Dan Clegg, Ken Hall, Craig Duck, Gay and Sue Reynolds

MARK YOUR CALENDAR NOW

ANNUAL BOARD MEETING APRIL: 23, 2009

FCFI SECOND ANNUAL APPRECIATION DINNER: APRIL 24, 2009

The board meeting is open to all and provides you with an opportunity to see how God is using FCFI. The dinner is followed by an award presentation program complete with music, our speaker Jim Bonson, food, a fantastic program, and time to fellowship with firefighters from across the nation — you won't want to miss this event. We have a block of rooms reserved in Plainfield about 10 miles from the convention center for a very reasonable rate. Please let us know as soon as possible if you would like a room.