

ATOR BRUSSELS REPORT

First, I want to thank every one of you who prayed for the team and the project! We simply could not do anything like this without prayer! And your willingness to partner with us in this particular way is essential for each project. Having said that, there will be another ATOR project in December this year to the West Bank and Israel. I will be announcing it at the end of June. If you wish to continue praying for this upcoming project you don't need to do anything except put up with my updates and reports—and of course, pray!! But if you signed on just for this particular project to Brussels, feel free to “unsubscribe” so to speak by emailing me back, specifying your wish to discontinue receiving this prayer letter. We will take you off the list, eternally grateful for your prayers for this project.

In putting together another project for A Tour of Roses there is always a ton of detail that goes into it. I want to especially thank Esther McCartney who diligently interviewed the team and put together most of the reports to send to Michael. And, of course, a very big thankyou to my husband, Michael, who formatted and corrected/edited each report, adding photos, as he was able, little dollops of his humor and encouragement, and sending it off as soon as he could.

I wanted to highlight this particular time that I don't pick the teams. People apply as they feel led to do so and the IPM (Improbable People Ministries) board reviews every application. In this case we decided anyone who participated in a previous ATOR project twice before did not need to reapply. They only needed to give their reason as to why they wanted to participate in this particular project. Heather Walker was first to say absolutely “yes” to the project. We both found it funny and amazing how she was almost the last person to meet all the financial deadlines. She was completely dependent on God's grace. I was at a prayer meeting at our church and people asked what the needs were for the Brussels team. I mentioned Heather, and one woman pulled out her checkbook on the spot and covered Heather's \$1000 deposit. The other standout event was at one of our early “prayer and prepare” meetings for the project. Dave and Yara Panther were both coming, but Yara said she was only there to pray and encourage as she had decided she would go to Israel in December. Dave felt led to participate in the Brussels project. During our prayer time I felt the Lord's strong leading to tell Yara she was part of the team for Brussels. I couldn't ignore what I felt the Lord saying. It turned out to be a confirmation of what the Lord had been speaking to Yara during the drive up to our house. And even though she had just started a brand new job and had real concerns about how they might react—God totally paved the way for her to go, providing for everything—and more. For those of you thinking about one day participating in this little project I will say what I say to everyone who asks, the

first thing is to find out is whether or not God is calling you to participate. The money is secondary. He provides for everyone He calls.

Surprisingly Brussels was more challenging than any other, even Israel and the West Bank, once we were there. Maybe it's because Brussels doesn't seem like it should be difficult. It is a very charming city in so many ways. But there is also a real darkness there as well, spiritually. From the very start there were challenges everyday we had to overcome as a team and individuals. Some of these were included in the reports back, like the 82 steps up to our apartment or how Randy got pickpocketed on Palm Sunday and all the confusion for the team trying to get to the market near Gare du Midi. Other things were more subtle like fatigue (felt like the jetlag never quite lifted), communication and misunderstandings. All of these things were human enough in the natural realm, but the enemy also used them to wear down our strength and resolve. And yet, by God's grace and through your intercession, we prevailed and overcame.

Another really beautiful element in this particular team was just how well everyone connected with each other. There were some beautiful priceless moments of transparency at different points with the team. People shared from the heart and our time of devotion was very encouraging and strengthening. People took turns leading the devotional time and Randy and Eric traded off with the worship, along with a contribution from Dave and myself.

Finally, I just want to say again that Jennifer was an invaluable part of our team!! She gave herself wholeheartedly to the ministry during our time together, and she was quite wonderful!!

April 7th – Friday:

Thankfully we all made it as scheduled—in the morning and evening—and Jennifer Rowland (an American missionary in Brussels) met us as planned. However, Heather and Randy's luggage got delayed in London at Heathrow Airport. It took time to locate their bags and fill out information so that the bags would be delivered later the same day (which they were). By the time we finished at the airport the florist had already arrived at the YWAM base with 33 buckets of roses. Thankfully, Jurgen, Esther, and Bibi were there. But I still had to pay him the cash for the roses. So it was decided I would take a cab and the rest of the team would travel by public transit—Jennifer leading them. I arrived about 15 minutes later at the YWAM base.

I looked up into the building and realized there were some serious stairs. Our 3-bedroom apartment was on the 4th floor with no elevator available. With high ceilings it probably was more like 5-6 stories up from ground level. Crazy stuff!! But, before I

could wig out, we just began handing the buckets up to each other in a chain-like fashion. We finished as the rest of the team showed up.

The first delivery was 2000 roses and they were gorgeous. They had an amazing scent—which cut roses almost never have. But I ordered these special because of their scent—Naomi roses.

We prayed as a team for God's will in Brussels and enjoyed a light lunch of sandwiches and chips. If anyone needed to rest, they did, and the remainder of the team began preparing roses to take to the Merode station that evening. Amazingly we made it out around 5:30 with a few buckets of roses and my keyboard. We walked up the block to the subway stop. I planted my keyboard and the buckets in front and we began. Lois, from the Red Light District ministry joined us, and also a young man named Oliver and a woman named Kate. So many people received the roses with smiles and appreciation. It was a beautiful beginning. We celebrated with falafels and shawarma at the Lebanese place a couple stores up from YWAM. It was good. Jennifer and I went to the airport to meet Felicia, who arrived later that night with no complications.

Randy:

I had a great conversation with a young lady named Maria. She's Filipino. She's here on a visa and working as au pair for a diplomat. She has sisters who are Christians, but she didn't quite understand the purpose of Christianity even though she grasped some concepts of it. I just kept coming back to that the judgment of God that was on us was taken away with us through Jesus's blood. She started crying, and she let me pray for her. She is a mother, and her child and husband are back in the Philippines. My prayer before I started on the trip was "Lord, let me sow seeds and be wherever you would have me," and it was a blessing to be able to share with her at the very beginning.

Bibi:

I met a Polish lady. She was very interested about the concert, and she was very excited that I could talk to her in Polish. I also spoke with a Spanish man. He was asking questions about the concert and was very interested in more information. I think he will come to the concert. He seemed so grateful for the rose. He gave me a kiss on the cheek before leaving.

April 8th – Saturday:

It turned out to be a little kinder to our neighbors to have breakfast first and devotions afterward. We had a time of foot washing and prayer for the rest of the team who

wasn't able to attend the meetings at my house. The Grand Place was a perfect place to give out roses. We were able to set up the keyboard in a corner area with the buckets in front and the team spread out, giving out roses to everyone they encountered—especially the shopkeepers. Serve the City sent out a special hospitality team to welcome us to Brussels, which was very nice. And again, the roses were received with joy and appreciation.

April 9th – Sunday:

It was decided that Jurgen and Heather would go to The Well and share with the church about ATOR and especially invite them to the Passover Seder. They would then rendezvous with the rest of the team at the marketplace at Gare du Midi. It's the largest open-air market in Europe with over 450 vendors.

Jennifer walked Jurgen and Heather over to The Well and returned. She ordered a van to come and pick up 12 buckets of roses, my keyboard and some of the team. But what showed up instead was a big truck, which could only seat two of us in front.

Jennifer had designated a particular subway stop, which turned out to be a bit further than expected from the actual marketplace. We unloaded all the buckets and my keyboard and stood waiting awhile for the rest of the team to magically appear. NOT! Finally, after 20 minutes, Jennifer went into the maul of the subway station to find them.

Esther:

When the team reached the market, we couldn't find Sally and Jennifer. We circled the market, praying for guidance. Eventually, we were able to connect with Jennifer over wifi and join her and Sally. When we joined them, Sally let us know that she had already been approached by the police about the roses. She was told that people could approach us about the roses, but we shouldn't go up to people and offer a rose. When we were finally able to start worshipping outside the market, we were flooded with people approaching us for roses! People were coming out of the market to get a rose! It was a beautiful moment of ministry to share the love of God with the people of Brussels.

As things turned out, the team got off at a different stop and gone through the marketplace trying to find Jennifer and me. In the process Randy's wallet was stolen. I stood outside the subway station for over an hour with buckets of roses trying not to give them away. The Lord had really laid it on my heart the marketplace was one of the important places to give out the roses and worship. Eventually everyone showed up. Amazingly, Randy was in good spirits. When we finally got to the marketplace 2

hours later than planned, all the roses were gone within a half hour. Many of the people who gathered around were Muslim, and they seemed very touched. I was singing worship songs like *There is a Redeemer* and *I Have a Maker*.

We had also put up a little sign offering prayer for anyone who wanted. No one seemed interested. But, after Randy and Jennifer returned from filing a report at the police station, a young Belgian man approached Randy as we were packing up and preparing to go to the Red Light District. He timidly asked if we had a little time to pray for him—and we did. A day or two before we left we met him again in the YWAM bookstore. He seemed in much better spirits and was thankful for our ministry to him.

I had requested prayer time in the Red Light District on Sunday afternoon so we could have an idea of what we were doing on Monday. Printemps is a tiny little Asian woman with a huge heart for young women entrapped in the sex-trade in Brussels. She walks the streets often alone, reaching out to the women with little tokens of kindness and scripture, making herself available to listen and encourage. The busiest area of the Red Light District is tightly controlled by the men. None of us, not even Printemps, knew how the women might react to the roses, let alone the men. When we arrived it was late, and many of the women were taking a break. A lot of windows were empty. But there were enough women still working the windows that we could get an idea of what we were facing. No one was nude, but very scantily clothed. And the posturing and posing was disturbing. We prayed all through the streets in a constant flow as we went out in twos and threes. Printemps walked with me and encouraged me to sing praises and worship as we walked and prayed. It was very good.

Esther:

Today was an exhausting day. First, Randy's situation really shook us. Then, we couldn't find Sally, Jennifer, and the roses. We circled the market and didn't see anything. When we finally met up with Sally, she warned us that the enemy was trying to stop us.

When we finally had the roses and keyboard at the edge of the market, it was amazing how doors opened. People were leaving the market to come and see us. We were surrounded with people as Sally led worship, and we passed out the roses. I had two men approach me and asked me why we were doing this. When I told them it was to share God's love with Brussels, the one man said "That's the best thing I've ever heard." We were in front of a hotel, and many of the hotel staff came out to receive a rose. It was a blessing to be able to minister to them and share with them. They had such joy on their faces!

Felicia:

Everything seemed to be going wrong, but I was determined that we were going to share roses in that market. When we couldn't find Sally, we were walking around the marketplace. We prayed as we searched for her, and I believe now that we were meant to prayer walk around the market before sharing the roses.

When we prayed in the red light district, I expected the women and the men in the area. I didn't expect it to be a neighborhood with children. That was heartbreaking to me that this is considered normal to these kids.

Randy:

After we got off the second metro train, I reached for my metro card to exit the metro station, and I realized that my wallet was gone. I didn't even realize that I had been pick-pocketed. I was in shock. Immediately, everyone I was with stopped and prayed for me, and I felt very blessed to be with friends in Christ.

After we passed out all the roses, we stayed in the area to offer to pray with anyone who wanted to. We sat there for a while and spoke to a few people, but no one asked for prayer. As we were leaving, a man came running up to us and asked if he was too late. "No, you're not too late." He was a young, Belgian man named Paul. He is a believer, who has deep anxiety. We were able to sit with him for a long time and talk and pray with him...I felt very blessed to pray and share with him.

Yvette:

After everything happened with Randy, I was really uncomfortable. I didn't even know how I was going to pass out roses because I was shook up about it, but I decided that was the work of the enemy. As we passed out the roses and Sally led worship, I just felt peace come over me, and I was able to serve the people at the market without fear.

On this trip, I've had a lot of fear about different things. As we pray walked through the red light district, the song "Fear is a Liar" came into my head, and with that song, I felt that God was reminding me that fear is a lie and not to buy into it.

April 10th – Monday

It truly amazes me how in certain moments God opens impossible doors. Today we stood before one of the major EU buildings, worshiping Jesus and giving out roses. We were rushed by security who asked what we were doing--what were our intentions, etc. I said to the head of the security, "The roses are free--they are a gift to express love to your people... and the music is also a gift. We are not political in any way. It is only about Love." The guy broke into a smile and turned and said to the other guards, "It's fine. They're fine." And they walked away and left us alone. We worshiped and gave out roses for an hour or more. It was cold and windy. In other parts of the city it rained, but not on us. That, too, was favor, and the grace of God! I sang about the love of Jesus in that place and His Kingdom, His peace and presence. The whole situation bore a strange resemblance to the prophets of old who preached the truth to unwilling hearts again and again. But music opens so many doors, and kindness even more.

Later, after lunch, we journeyed to a very different section of Brussels where women display themselves in windows that are like cages. The team and I began to offer roses at the windows. When the women understood (which they did almost immediately) that the roses were free, they broke their pose and walked over to their doors very quickly to receive a rose. As I handed it to them I was able to say, "God loves you! He sees you and cares for you! You are precious to Him." The street is tightly watched and controlled, but God gave us incredible favor and freedom to share His love.

After we finished we had a few roses left and were passing them out. A woman approached me asking about the roses and where we were from. When I said Los Angeles, she asked why would we come. I said, "Because God loves you." She said, "I'm not sure about that." I said, "No, He loves you." Her look of shock brought a smile to my face. I was glad I was able to share a rose with her.

Esther:

Today we started the morning with a new shipment of 2,000 roses. After transporting the roses upstairs, we took the roses that were prepared to the EU headquarters. Yesterday was beautifully sunny. Today was about 20 degrees colder and overcast.

As Sally worshipped outside the EU, I could see several people looking out of their office windows. I started to pray for the people in those buildings. I know that I'm guilty of not praying for our leaders or other government employees. These people are writing policies that can affect so many people, and we need to pray for them as well.

In the red light district, it was amazing to share with the women. The smiles on their faces were beautiful. We only had a few women refuse a rose, but most of them immediately left the windows and came to the door.

There were women in windows, but there were also "cafes" that operated as brothels. I was walking with Jennifer, and I saw 5 women sitting at a table in a cafe. I knocked on the door, and a woman opened the door like 3 inches and asked what I wanted. I said that I wanted to give her a rose because God loved her. She was hesitant, but she took a rose and said "For free?" When I confirmed that it was a free gift, she smiled and another woman at the table asked for a rose. There was a man at the door, blocking the entrance. When the other women asked for a rose too, he said that I could come in and opened the door. One woman approached me and said, "Why would you do this?" I said, "Because God loves you, and we wanted to give you this rose to bless you with his love today." You could see the hesitation leave their expressions. All of the women in the cafe accepted a rose and had huge smiles on their faces.

Yvette and Felicia:

As we passed out the roses in the red light district, we had learned how to say "Jesus loves you" in French, and we were trying to communicate with the women. There was this one woman, who we shared a rose with and stumbled to converse with her in French. After several attempts to communicate, she said, "Can I get one for my friend too?" in perfect English! It was too funny!

Yara:

At the EU, it was so cold, and the people we met seemed cold too. Many of them refused a rose, and it was difficult because most of Brussels has been so receptive to the roses.

As Esther and I walked down one side of the street passing our roses in the red light district, we walked along the right side of the street, and Bibi and Lois were on the left side. We were farther down the road than the other team, and there was this woman in the window on the left side that was watching us. You could tell by her expression that she thought we were going to pass her. Esther said that she thought we needed to go ahead and cross and give the woman a rose, so she knew she was seen. So, we did, and the lady's face totally lit up.

Jurgen:

European Parliament:

Sally set up her keyboard and security came. I thought that's it. Sally told them its non-political. The roses are gifts. What a miracle prepared by God and prayer. The security men were fine. Roses moved slowly but we were able to give them to people who walked into the building. I used the message of the card attached to the roses:

Red as a symbol of the people who died but red is also the symbol of Gods love. He has forgiven us and he wants us to forgive each other. He loves us. Some were genuinely touched. Sally was able to worship and sing in front of the building for the unseen world and to the One who sits upon the throne.

On the way back home in the metro I gave a lady a flower. She read it and seemed to be very touched. She wanted to talk to me but could only speak Italian but must have known some French because she read card. She looked again at card and flower and was very touched.

Red Light District:

First day when we were going to prayer walking in the red light district I was thinking of backing out. Maybe some fear of temptation. But I am so glad I went.

The next day we went to give away roses to the ladies and I got to be Sally's rose bearer and she made sure I did not get in trouble...just teasing....

I was able by God's grace. And it is his grace to look into the eyes of these ladies and see them a little bit from His heart. One time in the past, I think the Lord showed me that each woman is like a garden with two swords protecting her... My prayer was that when I go out and see the ladies in the red light area that I see something in their eyes I have not seen before with a pure heart.

We took the rest of the roses back with us to the train station waiting for the other group to come. As we waited people just walked up to us until all roses were gone. It was like Jesus himself drawing the people.

This morning as we had prayer and sharing and devotion time, one sister shared how she still feels the walls around her people from generations back as African Americans. I recognized again this morning that not so long ago I had a specific wall and fear toward her people. Listening to her and to my

brothers and sisters with Jesus in the midst of us and amongst us brings change and healing and brokenness in to my heart. Previous walls and any current walls of fear and pride in my heart will give place to the humility and brokenness of Jesus, even on the cross. He was and is God's Son and ambassador to us to bring peace, hope and love and forgiveness. Even the blood of Jesus is able to wash and change me from within.

April 11th – Tuesday

It was a profound time at the train station at Maalbeek. Set up the roses and keyboard across from the memorial wreaths laid against the wall where people from all over the world expressed their sentiments on a white board about the losses inflicted by the bombing over a year ago. As the roses went out to people from all walks of life during rush hour, many of them—maybe 50--laid their roses on the wreaths or set them into the floral arrangements, cards and all.

Many people paused before they laid their rose down--thinking--maybe praying. Only by the grace of God was I able to lift my voice in worship as it sounded through the levels of the station. People were moved by the roses. Still and sober in their faces--others lit with joy and appreciation. So thankful—grateful to be acknowledged in their loss.

After the last rose found a home, we gathered around the memorial to pray for God's redeeming power in the lives of the citizens of Brussels--and especially in that place.

Esther

When we were handing out roses at Maalbeek, I met a woman who had been at the station 5 minutes before the attack, and she said she heard the explosion. She was very touched by the rose and said "We won't let hate win." The people we met at Maalbeek were so grateful to accept the roses, and it was a blessing to share God's love to these people who are still so affected by this event.

Today, at the deportation center, I was honored to just pray over the area and ask God for healing. We had an amazing time of worship and prayer--just asking the Healer to restore.

Felicia:

On Tuesday, we took a much-needed break in the afternoon. It was great to hang out and fellowship with one another. The park was amazing and refreshing. Later that evening we went to Maalbeek Station, which was the

site of last year's terrorist attack. Many people were thankful for the roses and were touched that we were praying for them. I told them that most of us were from the States and that we understood what they were going through. One woman hugged me, others were very grateful and others who were intent on passing us by stopped and listened. Once we were done giving roses, three of us walked back to our home base instead of taking the Metro. On the way we saw our roses laid at a memorial for the attack, which was really touching.

Today we visited the deportation center I was struck by the enormity of what this place represented. It is now a set of apartments, which is still difficult to reconcile. There was a railway car across the street from the deportation center/ apartments. I could not believe how small the car was. I have seen these cars in movies, textbooks, on the Internet and I am sure I have a picture in one of my Power Points that I use when I lecture. It is so different to see it with your own eyes. However, I am grateful to God that I got to pray for this place, because I was filled with hope. God can really bring reconciliation even though this took place over 70 years ago.

Dave:

When we are at Maalbeek, I was handing out roses, and I met a German family. The family asked why we were doing this. There was a guy there who knew English and German, and he translated for the family. I told them that we remember what happened here--we've had our own incidents in the states. We're praying for them, and we love Brussels. God loves Brussels. Then, a Belgian young man came and asked why. When I started telling him, he was so moved. He grabbed my hand, and he gave me a chest bump. I also met a guy who said that he was working across the street when it happened. He thanked us for coming and said he also remembered San Bernardino.

At the deportation center, we did a prayer walk. I felt God met me there. It didn't feel heavy for me, even though I know what happened there. I was more focused on praying for change, instead of focusing on the past. I got to prayer walk in the courtyard and the perimeter of the building. Once I made a complete circle, I felt a complete release that God was going to do what we asked Him to do. It was a really awesome experience to know that God is going to answer all of our prayers.

Yara:

I noticed that at Maalbeek it was very quiet- solemn. Music pumps at the other stations, but Maalbeek is very quiet. A lot of people asked about the reason for the roses. When we told them, they were very grateful and were touched by the roses.

April 12th – Wednesday

Today, the team went to a Holocaust deportation center where 25,000 Jews from Brussels were sent to concentration camps. Some of the area has been renovated into a museum and apartments, but they took time to worship, prayer walk, and pray blessings over the land.

I had a very hard time recognizing the need to stay back at the apartment on my 60th birthday, of all things! I wanted to lead the group to the deportation center, worship and pray! But early in the morning the Lord was speaking to my heart about staying and letting Heather lead the crew. It was hard to stand aside, but it was clearly the right thing to do. Heather and Randy did an awesome job, and as reported, much of the team was impacted. Even recently Jennifer Rowland wrote me about staying in what was an old Nazi farmhouse with bullet marks in the walls during a recent retreat, and deciding to pray through the prayers that the team prayed in Mechelen.

Yvette:

Today was bittersweet. Bitter because we were in a place where something terrible happened and you could feel it, but sweet because we were able to prayer walk around the deportation center site. The song "Beautiful Things" was on my heart, the lyrics,

"All around, hope is springing up from this old ground,
Out of chaos life is being found in you."

That's how I really felt over the place. Like even though something terrible happened there, our redeemer lives and He loves us and renews us no matter what.

I was really happy because I was looking forward to worship and praise God in a dark place and when Heather brought her flags and let me use one, I was able to worship with flags. Such a blessing and honor to be able to shine my light in this place.

Jurgen:

We also went to the Kasserne Dossin to pray and to worship. Over 20000 Jews were collected here and shipped like animals to the killing places and concentration camps. 70,000 Jews lived in Belgium and only 1,200 survived the Holocaust. I never even heard of this place before and I am at loss and shocked again and again how we, my people have done something that goes beyond the deepest hell.

No wonder Jesus had to die on the cross in order to bring justice to all of our sins. His blood covers the deepest hell of my soul and the sins of my people and all people who reach out to him. Come Lord Jesus please come. Yes Jesus please come.

April 13th – Thursday

The team did two outings yesterday. I was not able to accompany them on the first one because I was still sick and wanted to save whatever energy I had for the second outreach in a different part of the Red Light District. In the morning the team went to a local cathedral, Saint Catherine's, and shared roses with the shopkeepers and locals.

Eric:

Outside of St. Catherine's Cathedral I met a lady named Nancy. She was a tourist guide in Brussels. When I handed her the rose she said she didn't understand why this was being handed to her. I told her that it was the love of God through the rose that mattered.

We continued to talk and discussed issues of the global community, how small the world was getting, and she said that there was a big difference between God for many people and who is behind the word God. Then we talked about Jesus. And she agreed that Jesus was the answer for the issues around the globe. Then she showed me a brochure for tours she was leading. One of the tours was for the Jewish people who were taken to the Deportation Center, in which the names of the people who were taken were written in chalk outside the front doors of the houses where they used to live. She said it was a very touching tour for her to lead.

Yvette:

What stood out the most to me today was when we were handing roses a lady walked over to me and she said, "Los Angeles?!" And we said, "Yeah..." and offered her a rose and she took it. Then she said, "Thank you for coming to Brussels" her English wasn't that good but she was trying to say "Care" so

she touched my chest and stomach and then she said, "Thank you for caring." That really touched my heart because she got it; she knew why we are here and she thought it was a good thing.

There was also a man by the church who looked like he was crying. He didn't speak any English. I walked over to him and gave him a rose and he read the card. I told him, "God bless you." I really wanted to pray for him but we could not communicate and he walked away. After he read the card, he raised the rose and yelled, "Merci!!!"

Felicia:

In the morning we passed out roses in front of Saint Catherine's Church. At first, people did not seem very receptive. Yvette suggested that we pray together. Afterwards, people seemed more receptive and we gave out many roses. Many were so happy and thankful that we would care about Belgium and come all this way to show them the love of God.

After a quick lunch and back up almost 70 stairs, we grabbed more roses and set out to another area that is known for prostitution. Lois, a woman who ministers to the women in the area, knows a lot of the women by name. They were so excited to see her. It was amazing to see the relationships that they develop in this ministry. As she led us we were able to talk and pray for the women. We met Mariette who felt that prostitution was her only option. She said she was in a crisis and that this was all she could do. Valerie, who Lois suspected to be on drugs, said this was the only way to provide for her family. Eliza wanted prayer for healing in her chest/ lungs. Fatima said she did not want to be a prostitute anymore and was looking for a job. A gentleman named Jean-Pierre accepted a rose and was curious about what we were doing. He came over and began to say that he tries to love people but it is difficult.

Sally sprang into action and began to speak with him while Lois translated. Jean-Pierre accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior! It was an amazing day. God was all over the city and used weary vessels that really had nothing left to give, but he poured into us to reach so many. It is a privilege to serve Him.

Esther:

At Saint Catherine's, a lady approached me holding a rose and said, "This is a wonderful thing you're doing. I've never seen anything like it- spreading roses through the city. It's a beautiful thing."

Another woman was so happy to receive a rose and said she had seen people with the roses and was wondering where they had come from.

When we went to another part of the red light district, I was blessed to witness Lois and Pritemp's ministry in this area. When the ladies saw Lois, they walked directly towards her with huge smiles and immediately asked for Pritemp. My group prayed with 4 different ladies, and I know those conversations happened because of their ministry that has gone before us.

As we passed out the last few roses, I handed a rose to Jean-Pierre. He immediately started talking in French, and I was so grateful that Lois was there to translate for us. As he started asking questions, Sally began a conversation with him. I stepped back and just prayed that God would bless that conversation. When he said that he wanted to accept Christ as his Savior, I was amazed by God's goodness to take a simple act of giving a man a rose to change his life forever.

Yara:

At St. Catherine's, there was a Spanish restaurant that we went to. The men inside spoke Spanish, and I was so excited that I was able to share with them. They were also happy to receive the rose.

Another woman I met who had dual citizenship with the US. She asked about the Seder. She said, "You're having a Seder supper? That's a lot of work!" She was very appreciative of the rose and interested in the information of the Seder.

Jurgen:

We went to the second place in the red light district with beautiful roses to share. Again we as guys were holding the roses and passed them on to the ladies in our group for them to pass on to the woman. It was a privilege again for me to walk these streets and looking the woman in the eyes and wishing them Gods love and presence. It was beautiful to see how some ladies of our group reached out and touch some of the women as they wanted them to pray for them.

One woman we prayed for said she is not doing this work by choice but needs to support her children to go to university. I was ready to give this woman money, but Lois the lady with us recommended not to since she might use it for drugs. The Lord I believe has used the brokenness of some of these woman to lead my heart in deeper repentance and a deeper knowing that without him I am lost and I was lost.

Randy:

Avenue Louise very beautiful neighborhood, even though it was business area—very upscale. I began talking to a young lady who was going home with her little Jack Russell yapper. Her name was Justina. As she received a flyer she asked about the events listed on the flyer and said, “Maybe one of these events will help me find God because I am seeking God.” The conversation had started out friendly, talking about her dog and other trivial facts and then I got talking about the Lord. I got talking a little bit about the world I grew up in. I was sharing some of my testimony and when I told her I had taken LSD long ago, she said she had recently taken LSD herself and it made her very aware of all the things she had done wrong. And in the conversation I asked her if she was from Brussels and she said, no, she was from Poland. So I shared my testimony regarding my search for truth and then Bibi, who was with Randy asked if they could pray for her because she said she had to go. She received prayer and then Bibi got into a whole long conversation with her in Polish.

Bibi:

Because Randy explained that Jesus was the only way to find God, I encouraged her that she could pray by herself and ask Jesus to come into her heart and life, ask Him to forgive her sins and receive His salvation and invite Him into her heart as Lord. I explained that this is His gift to her, but she has to make a decision. I told her to pray and ask the Lord what church she should go to. It was really a divine appointment and she was really listening.

Also, when we were walking I went to one shop. And this nice young woman alone in the shop was very pleased to receive a rose. And she looked at the flyer and she said, “Oh, this is a mistake. It’s spelled wrong.” (that was the Hebrew on the flyer for the word Seder, which means Order in English and the letters in Hebrew were actually out of order) And she said, “I am Jewish from Tunisia.” She was Sephardic. Her husband was a Polish Jew. And she said I speak a little Hebrew, but reads well. I told her my friend is also a Jew. Randy

came in and told her how he believes Yeshua is the Messiah. She was very interested in the Seder. She was very welcoming and very pleased to meet us. I also told her about the concert. In the end she said, "Chag Sameach!"

April 14th – Friday

We said goodbye to Jurgen in the morning. It was a very special time as we prayed over him. He asked for Dave's blessing in particular and Dave became very emotional. Then it was onto the Seder. There was much to be done in a short amount of time. Lois, who regularly participates in the ministry to the Red Light District said of the Seder, "It was prophetic. It was the first time a Seder was done that was open to the public."

The Seder was actually quite wonderful. Very intimate, warm and friendly People were able to follow along in French or Flemish--as needed.

We were supposed to get the kitchen turned over to us at 1PM, but the previous crew was still using it at 2PM-ish when Heather and crew arrived with groceries. And then at 4PM when we were supposed to put together the room for the evening, people were still sitting in chairs and not in a hurry to leave.

It was difficult not to be upset, at least for me and Jennifer! But once they cleared out things went much more smoothly. And the evening was really beautiful!! Randy was wonderful as the host. Heather and her team were awesome. And the rest of us weren't too bad either. As it has been said, "it was good to be in the house of the Lord!"

Heather:

Eric was a "mensch" and touched all the chicken for me! It seemed that we were two hours behind and things weren't going as planned. (But) the price of the food was half of what we budgeted for. And when I was freaking out over the lamb shank and the horseradish and the salt—Randy found them for me. The numbers were smaller than we hoped for but the night was full of great conversation because of the smaller numbers.

Bibi:

I found very special the time of washing feet. 6 people came to get their feet washed and we prayed as we washed their feet. And I felt God's presence and anointing. And the person I prayed for—later, she was very grateful. I was amazed at when Sally was singing and talking I couldn't hear Sally's cold at all. And also Randy's leading was really good! I felt peace, anointing, God's presence and order. It was beautiful!

Yara:

That was the first time I participated in a Seder. I thought it was a very beautiful experience. And what else was beautiful was that we all worked together and we all helped each other. We prayed and the Lord helped us to work together. Even when the Passover was done everyone (even the people who came as our guests who belong to The Well) just helped break the tables down and put it all away. It was the Body of Christ working together. It was a beautiful thing.

Yvette:

It was my first time attending one. And I liked how everything meant something. And then, I thought the worship was really beautiful and I really felt the Lord's presence. When I opened my eyes to look around during worship, people had their eyes closed and were worshipping.

Eric:

I thought it was truly enjoyed by everyone. The more Randy spoke the more they associated with the different elements of the supper. By the end there was laughter and joy. I thought Randy did a great job.

April 15 – Saturday

The team went again to The Grand Place to give out roses and had a wonderful time. I stayed back to rest and prepare for the concert. Eric made chicken salad and egg salad out of the leftovers from the Passover meal.

Heather:

We went out a-rosing. Yvette, Dave, and I were the tail end of the group. As we started out descending the first metro escalator, a woman politely hollered down the escalator, "Please, can you tell me what the roses are about?" I was nearing the end and she was near the top. "The story is too long for an escalator" :) We were in a bit of a rush, but this was a moment "of pause".

So I jumped off, grabbed a rose from Dave's bucket, and waited for her and her friend to continue the descent. I held the rose and G-d gave me the words. "Brussels has been through so much. G-d wants Brussels to know that He sees them. These roses are just to say, G-d sees you in the midst of the chaos. He knows. You are not alone."

Both she and her friend had tears on their eyes. She expressed thanks and her friend looked at the rose like it was so precious. And I realized I needed to grab a 2nd rose. (Duh) and thankfully Dave was still in arms length and I could grab one for her as well.

We went out towards the Grand Plaza and Randy made a connection with a man whose father was African and mother was Israeli. Amazing conversation although we were separated from the group. :)

His name is Vincent, he is seeking. Pray for a believing friend to come along side him and give him the time and conversation he needs.

By the time we got to the main square, the team was out of roses, we had barely half a bucket left. They were gone in 5 minutes.

Although we had anticipated going to the refugees, the opportunity was closed for that. Instead we encountered soooo many Arabs on the streets. They received the roses with such joy, just like in Jerusalem and Bethlehem. For those of you praying for the Arabs we would reach, they read the cards so diligently. Pray for the words against fear to sink deep.

Not many people came to the concert, although at least a couple Italian women who sat in front showed up because of the roses. Maybe 30 people in all. I really didn't know if I could vocally navigate a full concert and it really worried me when at first it seemed there might not be a microphone. But thanks to Carlton, it all worked out and I had a very nice sound system to work with. Jennifer set up the powerpoint with song translations in French and Flemish—and we worked well together. I could feel the Lord's presence during the evening and He helped me persevere even when I felt myself sorely lacking as a singer. But I knew the stories were as important as the songs, and everyone understood English well enough to understand. God was so faithful. A few people responded to my invitation at the end to take a rose as a symbol of letting go of their fear and judgement, bitterness and unforgiveness, and opening their hearts up on a deeper level to the love of Jesus.

April 16th – Sunday (Easter)

We attended the “All Well” celebration for Easter, put on by Operation Mobilization. The program was a multi-media presentation, beginning with a continental breakfast served in an area where we could view the artwork of several different artists who had put together a thematic showing. The main thrust of the whole presentation was to give us a sense of coming out of the darkness into the light. Many pieces were quite

compelling in their expression, as were different parts of the presentation on stage. But overall, I missed the expression of joy in His resurrection. I understood the darkness well enough, but I never felt connected to the joy. The four of us who attended (Yvette, Felicia, Eric and myself) all felt similarly to some extent and I wonder if this is universal in the church in Europe. There was a distanced gratitude for what Jesus has done on the cross, but I didn't feel any real connection to His love and joy. My prayer is that Joy would come to the European church.

We then took the subway to Gare du Midi and the open-air marketplace to see how the rest of the team fared with the roses. They were all gone by the time we arrived and one of the vendors had kindly stowed them away so the team could wander through the shops for last minute gifts. Many of the people at the market were Muslim. And they loved the roses.

Yara: Half of us went to the market place that day. As soon as we got out of the cab, people were walking by looking curiously at the buckets of roses and asking what they were for. We gave a few away before making it to the marketplace across the street. When we made it over the roses did not even last 20 minutes. The people were coming to us for a rose and when they asked why we were giving out free roses, we were able to tell them that God loves them. Many people smiled and said thank you. It never gets old, seeing someone's face change with a smile when you hand them this free gift.

When we finally got back to our apartment I gave Carlton stacks of cards and CDs to use for the ministry and church as he sees fit. We cleaned up everything and then spent 5-6 hours sharing and praying over each other. It was a beautiful time!!

Closing Thoughts from Some of the Team:

Heather:

Things that stuck with me from the Red Light district:

- Women walking down the streets with their handlers, and asking you to pray for them.
- Children playing in the streets in front of the 'display windows'.
- How many clients' cars had 'baby on board' type stickers and carseats.
- How women from certain countries (Bulgaria and Romania) are 'sextrafficked' and women from Africa are 'paying back their price of passage' or have family being held hostage. #slavery
- 2.5 yr old girl sitting in the window on the outskirts of the district because that is what girls do.

- An amazing woman who barely reaches 5ft, who walks the streets, is asked for by name by the transgender, the prostitutes, the addicts, the enslaved and the broken...because they know she truly cares for them. Who diligently walks dark places, often alone as most of those who once worked with her have abandoned the project.
- That more people are trafficked through Belgium than almost anywhere else in the EU.

When we talked about the red light district initially, the plan was to have the men wait outside on the borders while the women walked and prayed. This is not what happened. And in the course of it, I was convicted over not just my attitude but maybe the "church's " on the subject. This would be too tempting for the men, they may not be strong enough, or the world view : " we all know men only think of one thing". I was struck with how debasing this is to our brothers, the men in our lives. As the men walked the streets with us, made eye contact and handed out roses, they were showing the women a beautiful portrait of the Messiah. Genuine concern, offering of the roses, and men who did not want anything from them in return. I was really blessed by the testimony of truth that was brought to the red light district through this.

Yvette: Everyday we did something in Brussels. Everyday we served and spread the message of God and His love. Everyday something happened... It was beautiful. Everything, the highs and the lows it was beautiful because it was for Him! It was beautiful because He made it to be that way! God knew every single thing that was going to happen and who we were going to approach and He gave us all the grace that we needed. He gave me a new song everyday when the days were going to be a little harder than others. He took care of me, of all of us. I can't describe the mission trip... God is so good and I love Him. Jesus, my redeemer, my Lord, my Savior!! How I love you and oh how I see your love more than ever! I would say pray for Belgium but honestly pray for the world. So many people don't know Him and His real love and that's heartbreaking. Reveal yourself to them Father, capture their hearts with your beautiful love, soften their hearts so they can let you in! Thank you God for this experience and thank you for the beautiful people that were on the team.

Eric: I've been blessed in many ways. But recently experienced one of great impact to myself. That being the mission trip to Brussels, Belgium. As part of a team from 'A Tour of Roses' we placed a large impact upon this historical city.

By utilizing a simple long stem red rose by the thousands, five to be exact, we brought joy, tears, and happiness to this many people directly and thousands more indirectly. The roses represent the beauty of reconciliation and the love of God across many issues. But the target is mostly those who have been oppressed in various ways.

This particular trip targeted prostitutes, European Union officials, those who had the bombing just over a year ago, a city where deportations happened in WWII, city workers, mothers/ fathers/ children, shopkeepers, and more. It is hard to put into words the impact such efforts have upon a people, culture, city, and region. But suffice it to say that many people's hearts were touched and changed.

Yet, all this was only possible because God put it on the heart of one person, who grew into 12 over time, who went on to place their resources of time, money, and beliefs on the line in order for this to happen. It's to this small group that I raise my cup. A group that withstood numerous challenges, many setbacks, and long hours to accomplish what God wanted for this trip. You are a tribute to communicating the heart of Jesus to strangers.

Thanks to you, I myself have been made richer in my strength, perseverance, and resolve to keeping the important things foremost on my mind and heart. That is blessing others and being blessed by the God who lives with and in us.