

Schloss Heroldeck: Calvary's Castle in the Alps



Schloss Heroldeck hosts retreats for Calvary Chapel groups. Known as the Castle, it is located in the Austrian Alps.



Calvary Chapel pastors pray for one another as they sit by Lake Millstatt in southern Austria.

Story and photos by Tom Price

Each year, Calvary Chapel missionaries gather in an Austrian castle called "Schloss Heroldeck" for refreshment, rest, and rejuvenation. They study God's Word in the beauty of the Alps, seeking the Lord's fresh vision for their mission and desiring to hear His voice. The Castle is a year-round Christian oasis in Europe, open for believers to find a time of respite or as a starting point for those called to the mission field.

And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. ... But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours."

Genesis 26:18a, 20a

Redigging the Wells

"Just like Isaac, you are called to dig again the wells that have been filled in by the enemy throughout Europe," offered Pastor Brian Brodersen of CC Costa Mesa. It was the first teaching of the conference. Missionaries

from across Europe had arrived hours earlier at Schloss Heroldeck Castle, situated in the picturesque Alps of southern Austria, for a time of refreshment and revitalization during the 20th annual Western European Missions Conference.

Brian continued, "Europe—once the epicenter of Christianity—is now considered post-Christian. Agents of the enemy, with human philosophy and radical, aggressive unbelief, have filled in the wells across Europe; but the Lord has called you to dig again the wells that were dug in the days of the Reformation, the Moravians, and the Wesleys."

As the missionaries listened, their agreement was evident. Each felt that their

personal struggles were being highlighted. Brian encouraged them and then went on to remind the missionaries that their work is hard because the enemy is working to keep what he has already gained. "Sometimes when God has called us to do something, we have the false impression that the work will happen relatively easily," said Brian. "Look at Isaac and compare it to your situation. Digging out earth, which is a picture of the world, was incredibly difficult."

Brian continued, "We want to bear fruit, have people saved and discipled, the Word of God spread, and faith in Christ restored," added Brian. "So keep seeking the Lord and know that He has called you to the work in the area where you are serving."

He [Isaac] moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

Genesis 26:22

Throughout the week, noted CC Bible teachers Lloyd Pulley, CC Old Bridge, NJ; Chris McCarrick, Cornerstone CC, NJ; David Guzik, CC Bible College, Germany; and Demetri Nikiforos, CC Cape Town, South Africa, also encouraged and exhorted the visiting missionaries. The time for fellowship, relaxation, and refreshment was equally critical.



Pastor Rob Dingman, rear, and his wife, Joanie, lead worship with Tonio Petrigani, who is the son of Pastor Pierre of Calvary Chapel Nice, France.



Missionaries talk and relax under the outdoor veranda.



Robin Turner directs the Castle with the help of his wife, Alison.



Pastor Brian Brodersen encourages the men after David Guzik taught atop the diving platform at the dock below the Castle. "Schloss Heroldeck" is the proper name of the facility Calvary Chapel purchased and remodeled over 20 years ago that

houses conferences year-round.

"It was a great chance for me to pray with other missionaries—to lift them up and to be lifted up by others," said Joey Roper, an assistant pastor with Edmund Coronel at CC Herborn, Germany. "It was also wonderful to pray with others who understand the joys and heartbreaks of the ministry." Years ago, Joey felt the Lord calling him to become a full-time missionary to Germany, where he had led mission teams as the junior high youth pastor at CC Chino Hills—a position he had held for eight years. During the week of the conference, Joey suffered an extremely painful shoulder dislocation while making

a dive into the lake below the Castle. He returned hours later from the emergency clinic, his right arm in a sling, to joyous applause; the missionaries had prayed for his recovery.

Russian Pastor Pablo "Pasha" Revolveros leads the Calvary in Vladimir, located in western Russia. He and his wife, Lena, found the Castle to be almost paradise, except for the vast number of harassing honeybees. "The Lord sent the bees just to remind us that there is no heaven on earth," Pasha joked. He treasured his devotions on



Missionaries from across Europe gather at the Castle for a time of teaching, refreshing, and fellowship. Over 270 people attended the annual event.



Peggy Twente, left, and Linda Rourke are part of the CC Costa Mesa (CCCM) serving team.

the lake, the powerful teachings, the sunrises and sunsets over the mountains to ponder God's creation. "My eyes, ears, and heart could rest from the busy city life and stress of ministry," Pasha added. "I also cherished the intense fellowship with the comrade saints."

For most missionaries, the conference at the Castle was their sole time of rest during a busy year of ministry. After breakfast, a teaching followed by a divided men's and women's study led to an afternoon of rest, prayer, or fun down at the lake. In the evenings, praise music echoed from the worship center through the Alps.

Joanie Dingman is the wife of Pastor Rob from CC Twickenham, England. She commented, "It is easy to feel isolated on the mission field as you focus on the needs and problems specific to your area." The Dingman family had missed four consecutive missions conferences and were determined not to miss the conference again. "Fellowship, worship, and a time of rest with others in similar situations helps dispel the sense of being alone," added Joanie.

Continual Ministry at the Castle

For Robin and Alison Turner, the annual missions conference is anything but a time of rest. Hosting over 270 missionaries, church workers, and support people is



Missionaries gather for fellowship on the Castle's front porch and lawn.



Theresa Howard, CC Harrogate, right, and Renata Nigro, CC Treviso, pray.



Denise Skelton, a CCCM children's ministry teacher, leads a discussion in the prayer tower of the Castle with the older children.

a staggering endeavor that is truly a labor of love. It is the highlight of the year for the couple who oversees the year-round operation at Schloss Heroldeck, known affectionately as "the Castle." The facility hosted the Calvary Chapel European Bible College from 1992 to 2002, when the Bible College was moved to Vajta, Hungary. The Castle remains a centerpiece in Calvary's facilities—a dynamic conference center and a starting point for missionaries coming to minister in Europe.

"We have an amazing resource here," said Robin Turner, the Schloss Heroldeck director, who hails from England. "We want to make it available to the body of Christ in Europe as well as Christians from the U.S."

History of Schloss Heroldeck

Overlooking Lake Millstatt, construction of Schloss Heroldeck was completed in 1913. A wealthy Viennese family desired their summer retreat to resemble an old french chateau. In 1938, the Nazis forced the family to sell the Castle for a fraction of its worth to train young SS officers there. By 1944 the facility housed Austrian children from cities that were being bombed by the Allies. In the aftermath of war, it was used as a center for thousands of displaced and underprivileged children who blanketed Europe.

By the late 1980s, the Castle was neglected and up for sale. The leadership at CC Costa Mesa was approached as a potential buyer to turn the structure into a refugee center for those escaping communist oppression in Eastern Europe. As the Iron Curtain fell,

the purchase went through in 1989. Workers from various Calvary Chapels traveled to Austria to renovate it for its use to serve the body of Christ.

Schloss Heroldeck is now a small conference and retreat center with a 100-person meeting room, dining rooms, a comfortable lounge with open fireplace, coffee shop, 30-seat classroom, and prayer room atop the tower. Accommodations include seven dorm rooms and a guest room. Nearby is the Villa, a separate guesthouse for couples or families, with another 15 guest rooms. The view from the Castle across the front lawn presents a magnificent vista of Lake Millstatt, with its five square miles of water amidst the nearly 6,900 foot high mountains of the Alps. The Castle has its own dock on the lake.



Justin Dishong of CCCM encourages group participation as he leads worship for the children. CCCM volunteers taught the children, the sessions without worry. Through the windows, CCCM volunteers and Summer of Service participants can be seen working together to clean up after breakfast.



Five-year-old Jeremiah Cremé found the worship music too loud for his ears.

Besides the summer conferences, Robin desires to increase the number of church retreats hosted at the facility as well as continue to be an oasis of refreshment for individuals or groups involved in missions.

“Good food, good fellowship, good teaching, and a beautiful environment—that is what makes the Castle special,” added Robin. Churches can bring a team for mission work or a vacation. The Castle is located close to major ski resorts with snowboarding and cross-country skiing as well as resorts for glacier-based skiing. It offers mission-minded travelers an attractive facility at minimal cost in a location that is bathed in prayer by like-minded believers.

The Castle partners with CC Spittal, which is in a nearby town. Robin pastors the church,

which became a Calvary Chapel through missionaries from the Castle more than 15 years ago. Several people from the church work year-round at Schloss Heroldeck. This past summer, the international youth serving at the Castle teamed up with the youth at CC Spittal for outreaches and evangelism. The two groups performed skits together that overcame the language barrier.

Opportunities abound for teams to come and serve the different churches coming for conferences throughout the late spring and into the early fall. The full-time staff at the Castle is just eight adults. Several churches have filled some of the need by bringing teams to help serve in the summer. “It is an opportunity to meet missionaries from all over Europe while serving the body of Christ and the work of Calvary in Europe,” said Robin.

Summer of Service

Anyone 16 years of age and over is invited to live and serve at the Castle for Summer of Service (SoS). The ranks of the volunteers swell to more than 30 by July. “We invest in the spiritual lives of the mostly young people who come to serve,” said Robin. During the first week, the teens often experience homesickness and have to adjust to the work they are asked to do. But they are paired with other young people, and their attitudes change as they discover a servant’s heart within. They go on excursions to European cities when conferences are not being held and take part in mission trips and local outreaches.

Robin added, “It is work, but it is not boot camp. Teens leave here more mature, sure of their personal place in the body of Christ, and confident of the Lord’s leading in their



Isabella, Ben, Chloe, and Kale show the younger children how to give it your all.

lives.” Alex and Laura Lindsay run SoS at the Castle. They have three young children. Through Alex and Laura, teens observe the balance of serving God with a family while maintaining intimacy with Jesus. Alex comes from a music ministry background at CC Mansfield, England.

“Our goal is for the youth to have a complete discipleship and missionary experience in SoS,” said Alex. “We want the volunteers to begin thinking about God’s calling on their lives and to ask the Lord if they are called to a lifetime of service.” Alex’s goal for the coming year is to pass along more of the work oversight to the older volunteers, allowing him to concentrate on the spiritual growth of the youth. “Young people flourish when you show trust in their handling of responsibilities,” he added.

Testimonials of Service

Over the last several years, Marco Diamubeni has traveled from Calvary Chapel Rome, Italy, to participate in SoS. Marco’s father, Robert, was a political refugee from the former African nation of Zaire and now serves as an assistant pastor at the church. Marco feels that his service at Schloss Heroldeck has had a great impact on deepening his personal relationship with the Lord and sensing God’s direction in his life.

“During SoS, I felt that the Lord was teaching me about commitment in ministry and the need to sacrifice myself for the glory of

our King,” said Marco. He now feels called to spend a year in discipleship and ministry at Schloss Heroldeck. “Most of all, I have learned that I need to simply surrender my life to God’s will.”

This past summer, a 16-year-old English lad came from a Calvary Chapel in England and was very homesick. Both Robin and Alex ministered to him. After he made friends with the other teens, the young man began to grow in his walk with God. When it was time to return to England, his departure was sorrowful for everyone. Robin added with a grin, “By the time he left, people were referring to him as the assistant director of the Castle.” ☺



Chloe Judge took a quick break from the activities for rest.

Summer of Service

Volunteers 16 years of age and older are invited to apply for the Summer of Service (SoS) program. Spiritual discipleship and personal Bible study are encouraged in an environment that begins with a daily morning devotional time with team leaders. Group Bible study, worship, and prayer are held twice a week. Participants are expected to work 6-8 hours a day with a day off weekly and expected to pay 140 Euros per month for living expenses. Daily work can vary between housekeeping, kitchen, dining room, coffee shop, and grounds and maintenance duties.

SoS is both a missionary experience and school of discipleship designed to develop a servant's heart. Conference groups from Calvary Chapel churches across Europe are hosted from June through mid-September. The prayer of the staff is that each team member, through their experience in the SoS program would learn how to work unto the Lord in order to become true servants of God for their lifetime.



Schloss Heroldeck is situated on Lake Millstatt in the Alps of southern Austria.

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Summer of Service director Alex Lindsay gives daughter Livia a toss as his wife, Laura, holds Caleb and watches. Jonathan Guzik, with hat, and Summer of Service member Marco Diamubeni chat as they reacquaint.



Brian and Cheryl Brodersen teach a joint session on marriage.



Phil Twente, right, missions pastor at CCCM, prays with Clay and Jannelle Worrell, CC missionaries in Waterford, Ireland.