

Emmanuel Christian Centre, Varazdin, Croatia

Church Contact

Jonatan Vukov
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History

Steve Buck and Chawn Hill Church, Stourbridge (CHC) has an association and relationship with the Vukov Family in Croatia dating back to December 1993. This occasion coincided with the Balkan War and John Wanklin and Steve became involved with secular AID Charity that had taken humanitarian aid and resources to the region. Our contact in Varazdin, Croatia, was Baptist Pastor Nikola Vukov. He had to leave his pastoral role at his Church in the town of Cakovec in order to serve the needs of up to half a million ethnically cleansed refugees and displaced people, who were living in the northern part of Croatia in unused buildings and railway carriage stock. Nikola was encouraged to find that the AID teams included charismatic Christians and a positive relationship was formed. CHC helped resource Nikola on providing theological material and paid his health insurance premiums. Charismatic Christians in Croatia at the time were regarded by the established Churches with some suspicion! Steve met with Nikola, his family and some Christians from Varazdin in a flat for regular Bible Study groups that was to develop in to a Church plant and he was invited to return to work with Nikola on several occasions.

Nikola and his family shared the vision to plant a Christian Church in the town of Varazdin, a strategic classical baroque regional centre of 40.000 population that had no established Bible believing Church, but thirteen Roman Catholic congregations. In the Croatian cultural context, most of these did not recognise, and some opposed, other expressions of Christianity. However, after much prayer Emmanuel Christian Centre was established in 1997 in the town. A plot of land was purchased, a building renovated for the meetings and living accommodation for members of the Vukov family.

Rob Giles became involved with Steve and made a number of mission trips, and Brian Eccleshall, then CHC Senior Leader, invited Nikola Vukov as a CHC guest to a Pioneer Church weekend in Norfolk about 1997. This made an impact on him, and CHC sent out a mission team to Croatia the following year, including members of the mission organisation now known as Bless, who continued involvement with Croatian Christians elsewhere in the country.

Steve maintained the relationship with Emmanuel Christian Centre, Varazdin, making visits to Croatia on a regular basis. He has now visited the country fourteen times. He learned much from Nikola Vukov and his family, and they have been used by God the Father to

make Steve the man he is now. It was with much sadness Steve learned of the death of Nikola Vukov early in January this year.

Emmanuel Christian Centre is now well established and has an expanding missionary vision. In the latter years, Nikola has worked in partnership with his son Jonatan for pastoral responsibility of Emmanuel Christian Centre.

Emmanuel Christian Centre, Varazdin, Croatia - Key Prayer Points

Steve had a meeting with Jonatan Vukov in Bournville, Birmingham on Friday 1st May 2015 and subsequent contact continued through letter. The key prayer points are as follows:

- ✚ Jonatan says the grieving process for Nikola is very difficult for him, his family and Emmanuel Church. It has been an especially difficult journey for Nikola's widow, Ana.
- ✚ Jonatan says Emmanuel Christian Centre, Varazdin, has now grown to 90 - 100 people and has planted out twice in the nearby towns of Novi Marof and Ivanec. Please pray for the influence of Emmanuel Christian Centre to continue to spread and grow.
- ✚ Jonatan says his vision is to plant a total of five Churches in nearby towns. He also feels it necessary to be released to work for Emmanuel Christian Centre full time - he is currently able to work for the Church part time. Prayer is necessary for funding to make his full time employment at Emmanuel Christian Centre possible.
- ✚ The Vukov Family are blessed with musical ability and have reputation throughout the region. Jonatan Vukov has released an excellent CD of contemporary Christian music entitled "*Zivot Je Vise.*" Please pray for the musicians and the band to bring many to faith in Jesus Christ.
- ✚ Thank God - Varazdin as a town has been transformed spiritually. It has today six "Bible believing" Churches. May more people come to know a relationship with Jesus Christ!
- ✚ Jonatan and Emmanuel Christian Centre seek to build connections and relationships with Churches in Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Slovenia to collaborate and partner in bringing spiritual healing and restoration to the Balkan region. Please pray for Jonatan and like minded people and Churches to be brought together to work to this end.

Steve Buck
10th August 2015