



Uniting our hearts in PRAYER

PEGGY BANKS AND MIIA DA SILVA
WITH THE FINLAND TWR WOH TEAM

PHOTO BY JARI VÄHÄSARJA

Educating, encouraging and equipping women to pray, listen, learn, grow and give

For March and April, we are highlighting our work in Europe. In November 2021, I was traveling and visiting our teams and staff in Finland and Austria. I remember a night when we went into Vienna for dinner.

There was quite a bit of construction as old buildings were repaired and new buildings took shape in concrete, all reflecting the beauty of historic Vienna. I was surprised to see how smoothly things were running as the thousands of people visiting the city navigated around the building sites.

One time, as we pedestrians bunched together to avoid fences surrounding a construction site, we had to actually step into traffic while cars maneuvered past us. It all seemed very normal, causing little anxiety for the people around me.

I thought about the construction in our own lives – the times when God is building and repairing our character, hope and purpose. People in our lives keep walking by, not really knowing what's going on or seeing behind the fences that we have put up to keep

everyone out during this painful and often time-consuming process.

As we reflect on the prayer requests given to us by our European coordinator and teams, let us remember that God is building in each of us a new heart and a new life. And each of these circumstances provides the opportunity to draw closer to God. There are times when it feels like our lives are under construction, but in the end, they will reflect more of the image of Jesus.

For some additional personal devotional thoughts on how to draw closer to the Lord, please check out my article "Exploring Hope Today" in this issue.

In Him our hearts rejoice.

Dr. Peggy Banks

Global Ministry Director, TWR Women of Hope

By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

PROVERBS 24:3-4

MARCH/APRIL 2022
Europe



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**WOMEN
OF HOPE**

MARCH

1. Lord, we pray for the Croatian people of Petrinja, Glina and Sisak who experienced an earthquake in December 2020. Many are impoverished, cold and living in containers with little outside help. (Ps. 40:17)

2. Almost a third of Italian women have suffered sexual or physical abuse, and most are afraid to report the assaults. Father, bring healing to these women and true change to the hearts and minds of those committing the crimes. (Deut. 31:6)

3. God, raise up volunteers in Russia to visit Muslim families monthly to offer friendship and share Christ. May Muslim women not be afraid of their husbands but instead be open to these visits and to Jesus. (Prov. 29:25)

4. Lord, we pray for the TWR Women of Hope team in Spain who are working on the production of *Hidden Treasures*. Prepare the hearts of women who are victims of trafficking to hear of your love. (Rom. 5:8)

5. One-third of Bulgarian women have been victims of domestic violence. Protect and comfort these women. Father, provide a way of escape and place where they can receive help so they do not have to suffer in silence and fear. (1 Cor. 10:13)

6. God, we pray for spiritual awakening among the Danes so that they see their need for Jesus as their Savior. We ask that Norea Media Mission be your tool to bring the gospel to the Danish people. (Rom. 13:11)

7. Lord, we pray for the Roma who live in Serbia. Help them to stay in school so they may find good jobs and get out of poverty. We also ask that the practice of underage marriages between Roma boys and girls would cease. (1 Sam. 2:8)

8. Father, you call us as believers to a life of community rather than being self-focused. Bring a change of heart to those in the Netherlands and the Western world generally away from extreme individualism and to humility and valuing others. (Phil. 2:3)

9. Praise God for four new Finnish TWR Women of Hope prayer groups that started in 2021 despite ongoing lockdown



measures. Thank the Lord that the current number of groups in Finland is now 111. (1 Thess. 5:17)

10. Father, we pray that you would help Romanian Christian women to be good examples to their children and to respond in accordance with your will to the challenges in their lives. (Prov. 22:6)

11. In 2021, a German biography about Marli Spieker, the founder of TWR Women of Hope, was published. May many read this book, discover the ministry and become involved. (Acts 6:7)

12. Father, may single women in Norway feel loved and treasured by you and find purpose in their singleness and roles in the Church and community. (1 John 4:19)

13. Lord, so many in France are not practicing their Christian faith and half of the population does not even believe in you. May believers live out their faith in word and deed. (1 Pet. 2:12)

14. God, guide our TWR Women of Hope team in Portugal to create more programs on current themes and tailored for the women there. May you touch their lives, transform them and lead them to a true knowledge of Jesus. (Acts 4:12)

15. Heavenly Father, we ask for guidance and inspiration for the TWR Women of Hope team in Poland as they build up the ministry and produce programs. (2 Pet. 1:21)

16. God, we pray for the young women in Sweden who are going through identity crises. Help them find support and let them find their true identities in you. (2 Cor. 5:17)

17. Lord, we lift in prayer the new women's ministry leaders at TWR in Ukraine. We ask for wisdom and guidance for the whole team and the next season of ministry there. (Ps. 25:4-5)

18. We pray for Christian women who are serving you in Greenland. Many have had difficult childhoods and need healing from the trauma they experienced. (Ps. 147:3)

19. More than half of all Albanian women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Father, draw them to you for salvation and healing. May those who run domestic violence shelters be filled with your love and wisdom for these hurting women. (Jer. 17:14)

20. God, give strength and wisdom to those translating the prayer calendar in the Faroe Islands. May the intercessors there seek an intimate relationship with you. (Prov. 2:6)

21. Father, we ask for unity among the churches in Switzerland. With your help, may they settle any differences and keep the gospel as their focus. (1 Cor. 1:10)

22. God, we pray that the Finnish TWR Women of Hope team would find ways to get younger generations interested and involved in praying for women around the world. (Joel 1:3)

23. We pray for Danish women who are looked down upon, abused and turned out onto the streets with nowhere to go. God, you see those who suffer unjustly, and we trust that their suffering will be part of an eternal purpose for your glory. (Gen. 16:13)

24. Lord, please give wisdom and inspiration to the TWR Women of Hope team in Romania to create programs that have an impact on women's lives and glorify you. (Heb. 13:21)

25. Heavenly Father, we ask that you give hope, healing and comfort to the growing number of families in Serbia who are unable to have children. Comfort them through the opportunity to adopt or by otherwise helping those neglected by their biological parents. (Ps. 113:9)

26. Dear God, we pray that Roma children in Bulgaria will be integrated into their schools in a way that enables them to build life skills without being forced to change their cultural identity and that provides equal opportunities to achieve success. (Exod. 22:21)

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR REGIONS EUROPE

27. Father, break the chains of addiction to alcohol and hashish in Greenland. This evil has contributed to imprisonment, murders and suicides. May they find freedom in you. (Eph. 5:18)

28. Lord, we ask that you raise up young Christian influencers in Sweden who can reach other young people with your message of hope for the future. (Eph. 5:29)

29. God, we pray for equal rights and pay for men and women in Portugal. Help them to balance their responsibilities at work with those of caring for the home and children. (1 Tim. 3:5)

30. Father, protect and guide to freedom every woman in Europe who is a victim of human trafficking. May the *Hidden Treasures* programs help listeners know their value in God's eyes. Grant wisdom to the content creators, and inspire them by your Spirit. (Ps. 139:14)

31. God, touch the lives of those listening to the Romanian *Women of Hope* programs in Moldova. Bring volunteers to this Moldovan team to help grow the ministry there. (Ps. 51:10)

APRIL

1. Lord, bring emotional and physical healing to the many Russian women who are subscribed to TWR Women of Hope's Instagram page and have asked for prayer because of infertility. (Ps. 119:76)

2. Father, please bring people alongside widows in Albania to encourage them spiritually, lead them to emotional healing and help them gain economic independence. (Ps. 68:5)

3. God, bring revival to believers in Denmark. Open their eyes to the need to read your Word and pray to you daily. May mothers and grandmothers be aware of their spiritual significance as speakers of your life into the hearts of their children and grandchildren. (Prov. 7:1-3)

4. Lord, women coming through the Italian refugee and asylum system have been through much pain. Help the authorities to see and act on their need for medical, psychological and legal services. (Ps. 56:8)

Europe consists of 45 countries and holds within its borders a vast array of cultural and linguistic variance. It is estimated that there are about 160 culturally distinct groups in Europe. To date, about 72.2% of Europeans are Christian, 6.8% adhere to Islam and 20% are unaffiliated with any religious group. The remaining 1.0% belong to other religions. According to more recent studies, secularization is on the rise in Europe, especially among younger generations.

Challenges that women in particular face in Europe today include violence and sexual harassment, human trafficking and the ongoing ostracism of some ethnic groups, such as the Roma. The situation of domestic violence was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which reports of abuse by intimate partners rose around 60%, with one women's help organization in France reporting a 73% increase in calls.

Our TWR Women of Hope ministry in Europe speaks the message of hope in Jesus in 20 languages and dialects and engages women in ministry through media, small-group interaction and leadership training. Due to the vast cultural and linguistic variance among European countries, the ministry can take different shapes depending on the needs of local audiences and the skills of a given team. Groups in some countries focus on nurturing prayer groups and financially supporting international TWR Women of Hope projects,

while other teams emphasize closely engaging with audiences and serving these listeners with excellent programs and other media content.

A variety of media tools are used to serve our audiences: broadcasting, web radio, podcasts, social media and various digital messaging apps. Zoom and Facebook Live, for example, have also been utilized to enable prayer meetings to be held despite pandemic-related restrictions. Some of the teams also provide practical help when they can - ministering to women in prisons, for example. This often entails training staff or inmates on topics such as domestic violence, relationship management or teamwork in a prison environment.

With the decline of religious interest among younger Europeans, reaching women ages 18-35 is an important goal for many of the teams. In this age group, women make important decisions about their careers and families but may not have a biblical outlook when doing so. We want to come alongside younger women not only with programs and content but also by raising up the next generation of Christian leaders through mentoring and leadership training. We are ministering in our different countries to make sure not only that Europe is "Christian on paper" but also that more and more women on this continent would accept Christ into their hearts.

- Miia da Silva, TWR Women of Hope regional coordinator for Europe, Central Asia, Middle East and North Africa

5. Because of loneliness, many young Swedish girls spend much time on the internet. We pray for your emotional, physical and spiritual protection over them, Father. May they not become victims of coercion or extortion. (Prov. 4:23)

6. God, give the Serbian team great creativity in how to influence the spiritual lives of women. Use their *Women of Hope* programs and prayer calendar to draw women toward greater intimacy with you through prayer and reading your Word. (Eph. 4:15)



CROATIA & SERBIA TWR WOH TEAM MEMBERS

7. Revive Christian women in Norway, Lord. May they slow their busy pace and prioritize their time with you in prayer and your Word. (Matt. 6:33)

8. Father, we pray for the healing of those girls and boys in Greenland who have been exposed to sexual abuse and incest. Work also in the lives of fathers and mothers to respect, love and care for their children. (Eph. 6:4)

9. Praise God for the growing influence of local Christian radio on French society. Since 1981, stations have spread to cover the nation with positive and godly content. (Eph. 3:20-21)

10. Lord, we pray for a positive reception of the *Hidden Treasures* audio series at the German congress against human trafficking in May. May social workers and organizations accept and use this effective tool. (Matt. 13:44)

11. Father, give courage and wisdom to the new government of the Netherlands, especially the members who are believers. May they use your standards to guide them as they make important decisions regarding public health, housing and medical ethics. (Ps. 72:1-20)

12. God, open the hearts of Roma women in Bulgaria to your salvation and to your wisdom in raising their families. Help them to overcome both the social and educational barriers before them. (Luke 18:27)

13. We praise you, God, for the March offerings being collected in the Finnish and Swedish Lutheran congregations to help support the *Women of Hope* programs sponsored by our partner in Finland. (Luke 6:38)

14. Father, you are our provider. Guide Croatian women to good employment opportunities to support their families. May they have faith and courage as they look to you. (Phil. 4:19)

15. Lord, thank you for the TWR Women of Hope team in Portugal. Please grant this team unity of heart and vision, guiding them in raising the finances and addi-

tional team members needed to minister to the women of Portugal. (Phil. 2:2)

16. Lord, we pray that women from foreign nations who live in the Faroe Islands would be accepted into the communities. Bring Christian faith to these families. (Exod. 23:9)

17. Father, please strengthen the women in Romania who are bringing food and daily necessities as well as love and godly counsel to families affected by COVID-19. May they bring your comfort to those who mourn their loved ones. (John 11:25)

18. As a result of the pandemic, many people in Spain suffer from isolation, loneliness and unresolved grief. We pray that they may come to know you, the God of all peace. (John 14:27)

19. Lord, we pray that the people of Switzerland would be curious about the Christian faith and be open to studying its core truths. (Isa. 26:9)

20. Father, we pray for pimps and others who play roles in women being trafficked like commodities. Convict their hearts to turn away from evil and toward you and new life. (Isa. 1:16)

21. Lord, give wisdom and grace to all those ministering to women in Albanian prisons. Thank you for Christian organizations like Shkbsh that are helping incarcerated women find hope in Jesus. (Heb. 13:3)

22. Open the hearts of Norwegian women to believe in you and embrace your love and goodness, Lord. May they be healed of their feelings of shame, guilt and rejection and receive your love, care and mercy. (Rom. 8:1)

23. Father, we pray for your protection over the minds and hearts of students in France. May each student find his or her value and identity in your truth. (Ps. 100:3)



24. We pray for the healing of Italian women who are experiencing psychological violence. Break the chains of the enemy, Father, and help these women find both refuge in your Word and the proper treatment they need. (John 8:32)

25. Thank you, Lord, that Christian schools in the Netherlands have received public funding for over 100 years. May they continue to be places where your biblical truth is taught and embraced. (Titus 2:1)

26. We bring before you, Lord, the 50,000 inhabitants of the Faroe Islands. Although scattered among 18 islands, bring a sense of community and unity to the people there. (Col. 3:14)

27. May Russian women be drawn to the *Women of Hope* programs and discover a loving heavenly Father, who longs to heal their broken hearts. (Ps. 34:18)

28. We thank God that young believers in Switzerland are willing to commit themselves to the Christian faith. May they continue to grow deeper in an intimate relationship with you. (1 Pet. 2:2)

29. Father, we ask that in you the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina would be reconciled and come together in peace. Give wisdom to the country's leaders as they make decisions for their nation. (Rom. 12:18)

30. God, you see the trend toward young people rejecting religion. May the youth of Czechia find Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and grow a new generation of believers there. (Eccles. 12:1)



Can you hear me?

*Out of the depths I cry to you,
O Lord! O Lord, hear my voice!*

– PSALM 130:1-2

“Mom! Mom! Mom!” the young boy screamed to his mother from several yards down the beach. I think he wanted permission to continue walking in the direction he was exploring for the day. The only problem was that he was too far away from his mother, and she couldn’t hear his voice. It was only when he got closer to her that she heard his voice and gave him permission to explore more in the direction he was walking.

As I observed this interaction, God spoke to my heart about my own cries to the Lord for permission and guidance. He reminded me that there have been times when I cried out to God with my voice, but my heart was a long distance away from him. I remembered thinking, “I don’t think he can hear me. Why isn’t he answering me? Has God forgotten me?”

In Psalm 130, the psalmist cried out for God to show mercy to the people. He continues to encourage the nation to believe and wait in hope that God will redeem them from their iniquities.

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

– PSALM 130:7-8

What does it take for God to hear our voices? What must we consider as we seek personal guidance from him and a stronger relationship with him? And as we make plans and take steps toward



PHOTO VIA PEXELS

TWR Women of Hope projects for 2022, how do we ensure that we are relying on the Lord for wisdom and guidance?

Much like the young boy on the beach who needed to draw closer to Mom so she could hear his voice, I believe that is what’s necessary for God to really hear our voices. But what does it mean to draw closer to God?

Make Time

Each day, we have the opportunity to choose what we will do with the first hour or two of the next 24. Will we draw closer to God or closer to the world? What would it mean if for the first 30 minutes you decided to set aside your phone, the computer, and the TV remote while you just pray, meditate, and give thanks to God for all he has provided?

Drawing closer to God requires us to move in his direction. We can’t keep walking away from him and think he will hear us. We can’t keep putting only our needs and petitions before him and think he knows we are committed to building a relationship. To build any relationship that really matters to us, we need to

draw closer to the other person so we can communicate and learn about each other’s passions, desires, thoughts and dreams. Isn’t God worth the first minutes of our day so we can learn more about his love, desires and dreams for us?

Show Love

When we draw closer to God and understand his love for us, we are more likely to show love for others. When we are learning about and receiving more of his love, we can’t help but reflect the image of his love to others. His Word gives us a deeper understanding of his grace, mercy and forgiveness. When we embrace his grace, mercy and forgiveness, we are more likely to give those things to others.

Don’t let a day go by this year without drawing closer to the Lord. You will be able to hear his voice when you are closer to him. He may see that you are starting out from far away, but as you get closer, you will hear him more clearly when he gives you direction, guidance and love.

Surrender anything today that is keeping you from moving closer to the Lord.

In Him our hearts rejoice.

STORY OF HOPE

For His Glory

We cannot even begin to imagine where his mercy can take us. Indeed, our God has a plan for each of us. My name is Hana, and I am serving with the TWR Women of Hope ministry in Croatia.

About 23 years ago, I was a drug addict, but God liberated me from my addiction. For 15 years I worked with drug addicts in rehab centers in Spain, France, Croatia and Serbia. Serving God is something I am passionate about because I firmly believe that what I have received I have to give.

When I heard about this ministry and its radio programs, I felt like God was calling me, so I responded. A month ago, I was presenting the TWR Women of Hope ministry to pastors and leaders. Afterward I walked around the church giving a prayer calendar to every person I encountered.

One pastor stopped me and said: "Interesting how God sooner or later does what he planned with us."

Surprised, I said, "Excuse me, I don't understand."

He smiled and said that 20 years ago he heard me when I was a guest being interviewed on a radio program. Apparently, I was speaking about drug addiction and was giving my testimony. The host of the program asked me if I had ever thought about working in radio because she saw that I had a talent for it. When this pastor reminded me about that interview, I was so surprised and touched.

He said: "God gave you a talent, and now 20 years later you are doing what he always planned for his kingdom." And he blessed me and the ministry.

I never could have imagined that I would be making radio programs. I doubted if I was good enough for this ministry. So the words of that pastor were extremely supportive and encouraging.

May I encourage every one of you reading my words to know this: God gave you talents, and he will use them for his glory. You will be so blessed knowing that you are serving the King of kings and that you are chosen and worthy!

– Hana Melinščak, national coordinator
for TWR Women of Hope Croatia

A Word of Hope

From Lisa Hall, TWR Women of Hope
international prayer coordinator



Standing Strong in God Through Challenging Circumstances PART 2 IN A SERIES

Who am I? Where did I come from? What is the meaning of my life? I think all of us at some point in our lives have asked these same questions. It is central in every human heart to desire to be significant, to belong and to have purpose and value. The great news is that we don't have to wonder about the answers. God has shared them in the Bible, and they center on what he says about himself and us, his children.

In an amazing account, Moses pleads with God to teach the Israelites his ways so that they could **know** God and follow him. God appears before Moses and declares, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, **slow to anger**, abounding in **love** and **faithfulness**, maintaining **love** to thousands, and **forgiving** wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he **punishes** the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Ex. 34:6-7). And later he adds that he will punish "those who **hate** me but [show] love to a thousand generations of those who **love** me and keep my commandments" (Deut. 5:9-10).

God proclaims himself to be a God of compassion, mercy and love but is clear that he is also a God of justice and will not tolerate idolatry. He is a covenant God who desires an exclusive and intimate relationship with you!

This declaration from God about his character is a great encouragement to us. Our amazing God also declares that he does not change (Isa. 40:8). He will never leave us or

forsake us (Deut. 31:8). This knowledge gives us strength, comfort, stability and assurance that the God who created us is consistent, dependable and just. We can count on him.

We need to get our facts right. Don't accept what others have told you about God. Go to the source and find out what he says about himself. What we believe has a profound impact on our lives. Our beliefs influence our feelings, which determine our actions, which steer the course of our lives. Do you have an accurate view of God?

Do you also have an accurate view of yourself? If we want to make sure that what we believe is true, we can go to the Word of the one who created us. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we are buried with him in his death and raised to a new life in Christ. We are **forgiven** and given new life. God desires to bring healing to every part of our lives, but walking in the life he has for us starts with **believing the truth**. In Ephesians we discover that God has **adopted** us (1:5), **redeemed** us (1:7), **chosen** us (1:11) and **sealed** us with the promised Holy Spirit (1:13). We are saved by his grace through faith and created to do good works (2:8-9). Our value and worth does not come from what we do or how we look. It is based completely on "whose" we are – God's precious beloved children.

How do we stand strong in God through challenging circumstances? We build our lives on these core beliefs – understanding who God is and who God says we are. If we believe what God says and live with his truth as our foundation, when the storms of life come, we will still be standing in the end (Matt. 7:24-27). How would your life change if you saw God and yourself in the same way that he does?