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**From:** The Matthews Family in Ireland <phil@philandmartha.org>

**Sent:** Saturday, July 23, 2022, 02:39:43 AM EDT

**Subject:** Matthews July update

July Newsletter 2022

Hello from cloudy Ireland! Last weekend we had a couple days of sunshine and heat and it seemed summer had finally arrived. But the clouds and showers have returned. Maybe just as well, as a good half of the island are nursing sunburns. When the sun does shine here there is nowhere nicer; beautiful seashore, long stretches of beach, and only a few of them crowded. We managed to get out to one such beach for an afternoon, and it was bliss to just be there and to be surrounded by the wonders of God's creativity. Yesterday I slipped down to the Liffey River for a quiet half hour. As I sat by the water Psalm 23 came to mind. He leads me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. I believe this is true in the physical real world of creation, while also providing a deep metaphor. We need these moments that nourish the soul and feed us, these green pastures. I pray you are finding these times of soul restoration too.

We need this all the more now as life has speeded up again after lockdowns. Just after our last letter the churches here in Ireland were allowed to reopen fully. It has been wonderful to be able to worship together in a large gathering again, to be with a hundred other people here in Celbridge, sharing communion, singing and praying and looking together at God's Word. It was especially meaningful to be able to hold Easter celebrations live and in person for the first time in 3 years. Please pray for church leaders here in Ireland and for our Communitas missionaries throughout Europe as they continue to adapt to changes. Some are still holding hybrid services, some have stopped the online service. While many people are thrilled to be back, there are also many who have not returned. You may be facing similar challenges in your churches and gatherings. Please do let us know how we can pray for you.

Opening up of restrictions and travel has also meant that as a Communitas family we are able to gather again. We are a mission agency that loves to be in each other's presence when we can. In April we were part of the Eurocast, where we gathered with many of our fellow missionaries who are based throughout Europe and some of the US staff and board members. It was a refreshing time of looking at where we are and where we are going and hearing stories from the field. We heard first hand of some of the challenges facing our Ukrainian brothers and sisters, and also our fellow believers in Russia, where it is very difficult for those who would speak up against the war. Please pray for our fellow workers in these countries, many of our colleagues throughout Europe are working directly with the thousands of Ukrainian refugees that have had to flee their homes. Please pray for those refugees and for those who are working so hard to provide help and hope.

July 25th to 29 we will be holding our Communitas Family Reunion. This is a chance for missionaries to come, bring their families, and relax and refresh, a sort of family retreat. This will be the first one we have attended. Martha is part of the planning committee. The goal is to create relaxed atmosphere with the right balance of times for worship and encouragement, activities, and time for just being together, connecting, and having a bit of fun. Both of us will be

leading morning family devotion times. In the afternoons we will be available to meet with anyone who wants prayer or to talk through something they are facing. Sarah will be coming with us, she was also able to be at Eurocast. Please pray that Sarah has me good times of connection and encouragement with other teens and young adults. Pray for these few days to be precious times of allowing God to restore our souls. Pray that we both are sensitive to the needs of those around us and wise as we offer pastoral care.

Back in Dublin, Phil is serving as a chaplain to a hospice. Please pray for him in this challenging role. It is a true privilege to be able to come along side people at such a vulnerable time in their lives. Please pray for much wisdom and grace, and for openings to pray with and share the love of God with precious individuals. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide the many conversations that happen each day with residents, their families and staff.

Martha continues her work with inner city schools, helping to encourage family literacy. The last few years have brought many extra challenges with Covid. Summer months provide a welcome chance to catch our breath and prepare and plan for September. Please pray that the work done through the school term will “stick” and for each of the children who have now completed the program.

Finally, Please pray for all of our children. Pray that they know the Love of God in their lives and seek to follow him. And tell us how we can pray for you and yours too!

We’ve given you plenty to pray for. Thank you so so much for being partners with us and for standing with us in prayer. We truly cannot do anything for God on our own, we need each other, and we need each other’s prayers. Thank you so much for yours.

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