

Alumni Spotlight: Andrew Funka (MAME '12)



Current title: 'Alongsider'

Family: Spouse, Amy Funka

Favorite professor: Paul Martindale, Peter Kuzmic, Paul Borthwick, Steve Kang

Favorite class: Personal Evangelism through the Local Church (Sam Schutz)

Favorite memory: Besides the Clam Bake, the great atmosphere of all different kinds of people earnestly seeking to understand who God is and how to best serve Him.

Where are you currently serving as a missionary and what is your work there?

I am currently serving as a missionary in the Czech Republic with Alongside Ministries International. We serve in partnerships with local churches and Christian organizations to strengthen the Church and advance the Gospel. My primary partnership here is with the national office of the Czech Evangelical Alliance in Prague. Through this partnership, I help to support and encourage Christian education, leadership development (especially with young people), church planting and parish renewal.



Left: English Camp 2020

How has God woven together your time at Gordon-Conwell with other life events to lead you to where you are now?

I've been serving as a missionary with Alongside since 2004. Before that, I was a youth pastor in the Methodist Church in the USA. After 5 years in Scotland (amongst the Church of Scotland Presbyterians), Amy and I were contemplating a move to the

Czech Republic, and with that I wanted to gain some additional training and qualifications for cross-cultural mission work. Gordon-Conwell made that possible, both through the Missions and Evangelism M.A. and through the Partnership Scholarship Program. So, Gordon-Conwell was sort of woven into the whole process of our transition from serving in Scotland to serving in the Czech Republic. People and organizations I encountered at, and due to, Gordon-Conwell have and continue to play important roles in my work here.

What do you love about your work? What are some of the hard things about life as a missionary in your context?

I love history, the outdoors, and new experiences, and I want people to know the Good News about Jesus. The Czech Republic is full of history, the Czechs love getting outdoors, and the country has an amazing and well-developed hiking trail system. And of course somewhere upwards of 80% of Czechs claim to be 'non-religious,' most of them have never actually encountered the Gospel of Jesus. The Czech Republic is a great fit for who I am. The language is tough – made even more difficult by the fact that so few foreigners learn to speak it, so if you don't get it right, they genuinely cannot understand what you are trying to say. We're in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire, complicated by over 40 years of communist totalitarianism, so the bureaucracy here is just unbelievably inefficient. Probably the two hardest things right now in my context are the lack of healthy churches – there are so few Christians in this country, and it is tragic that even those who are trying to follow Jesus don't have a healthy local church close enough to attend regularly. And on a personal level, it is quite difficult to develop strong friendships here. There are a variety of reasons for that, and it is possible, but it takes an effort and an amount of time that we're not used to having to invest in our friendly American culture.

How has your Gordon-Conwell education served you in your past and current work?

Gordon-Conwell provided me with a much stronger theological foundation, along with practical knowledge in cross-cultural missions that I put into practice every day, whether it is ongoing language learning, applied anthropology, or different ways to talk to skeptical people about the Good News about Jesus. Gordon-Conwell also helped me to connect with people who have and continue to help me and others here with the ongoing challenges of reaching one of the most secular nations on the planet with the Gospel.

What piece of advice would you give to alumni who are considering the mission field?

Language learning is ministry. Don't neglect it. Also, raising support and maintaining your financial support network is not going to be the most difficult part of your mission work. The Lord will provide the resources you need.

Links:

Alongside Ministries International: www.alongside.org

Christian International School of Prague: www.cisprague.org

Komenského Institut: www.komenskyinstitute.com

About M4 Europe: www.m4europe.com;

M4 Online Training Course: www.m4ready.com

CentralEuropean Center for Mission Studies (SCMS) missioncentre.eu/en/