



# CANOPY OF PRAYER

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## Dear prayer friends in Europe,

Many of you know about the journey of the **European Union of Prayer** group travelling for 14 years to whichever EU country was holding the presidency for half a year. We finished that time in October 2020 in London. After some delay due to covid-19 we have entered a new phase: In the coming 7 years we will visit the other countries of Europe with a new name: **Europeans United in Prayer**. This April from 3 – 7 we will meet in Skopje in North Macedonia. Marino will tell us more about this country, where he lives.

Corrie Oosterhuis

## A portrait of North Macedonia

### Matthew 24:6-13

*You will hear of wars and rumours of wars ... Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me ... but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. (NIV)*

As I write this message, we are in the middle of war in Ukraine. How inconceivable! Well, we in Europe have learned from experience that since WW2 there has been no war ... except in the Balkans! As the followers of Jesus we know He always told the truth, so in this case, Jesus told us that we will experience wars. And not only wars between the nations, but also against us as his followers. For us the last statement in verse 13 is important – about standing firm to the end. We are to stand firm to the end. Let us help one another, encourage one another and sustain one another to stand firm to the end.

### NORTH MACEDONIA

Soon after independence in 1997, there was a war in the Republic of Macedonia in 2001, now called Republic of North Macedonia. The Macedonians feel betrayed over the name issue, but that is only one of the issues. Croatia and Macedonia had the same start as candidate countries to the EU. Well, Croatia became a member in 2013, while North Macedonia still waits for a date for negotiations to be started. I do not want to point fingers at anyone here, but just to point out the fact that membership of the EU is now seen, by much of the population, as something that may never happen, in spite of all the promises.

In North Macedonia the two largest ethnic groups are Macedonians and Albanians. There are other ethnicities, like Turks, Roma, Serbs, Croats, Bulgarians, Vlachs, ... The Latin meaning of the name Macedonia is used for a salad, and you can really see that reflected in the mix of the population. Macedonians and Albanians hold the power structures. Hm, did I mention that we had a war in 2001?! Well, there was almost a war when, as the shooting happened in the city of Kumanovo, in an area known as “Wild Suburb” (Divo Naselje), in 2015.

And there is another potentially dangerous situation in the country ... the census. It was taken last year and we expect the results by the end of March. It is suspected that there will be some surprises which could affect the balance of power between the 2 main ethnic groups. In the last Census in 2002, 25% of the population declared themselves as Albanian, and 64 % said they were Macedonian. Well, I put this all into relatively simple sentences, yet the stories always have more to them than can meet the eye.

Let me make things a bit more complicated. In the Parliament we have two major Macedonian parties and three Albanian parties ... and within their ethnic groups the parties find it hard to get along.

So far, I have spoken of the structures of power, but let us not forget the common person. The people are wonderful. I have friends from almost all groups. The common person wants to have good relationships with everyone so that their job can succeed and that they can live in peace.

On the religious level, we have two big groups: Macedonian Orthodox Church (Macedonians) and Islam Community (Albanians, Roma and others). We also have a Roman Catholic Church, a Jewish Community and Evangelical-Protestant groups that often work in unity.

### Please pray for:

- Peace in Ukraine (I hope by the time this is published the war will be over!)
- Peace in North Macedonia
- Revival in North Macedonia



## Update on Hungary's election campaign

The war in Ukraine has altered the political context in the run up to the election on 3rd April between Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party and the opposition coalition, led by Péter Márki-Zay. Orbán, despite his long-term friendship with Moscow, has now cast himself as the “pro-peace” candidate, condemning Russia's “military action”, choosing not to oppose EU sanctions, and granting visa-free access to over 200,000 Ukrainian refugees. He accuses his opponent of being “pro-war”, while Márki-Zay talks of the choice between “Orbán and Putin or the west and Europe”. Let's keep praying for God's will to be done in Hungary.

## Additional Prayer Points:-

1. As the conflict between Ukraine and Russia enters its second month, pray for it to come to a speedy end.
2. Pray that political leaders from the west will deal in a diplomatic way with the situation in Ukraine and that their comments in the Media will not cause any ‘unnecessary’ anger to Putin and the Kremlin.

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