

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026



AT THE ORCHARD

A PLACE TO GROW

ROOTED AND GROWING

As we enter a new ministry season here at The Orchard, we are anticipating God doing some great things as we grow in faith, hope, and love through the gospel of Jesus Christ. So much happened this summer, and we would be missing out if we didn't take a moment to reflect on what God did through The Orchard during the summer of 2026.

This issue of *At The Orchard* offers a report (and pictures!) of God at work through His people at The Orchard. As you look through these pages, take a moment to reflect on what God has done this summer, and rejoice and celebrate His goodness.

ALL CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE | JULY 19, 2026

On July 19, we enjoyed a special time of sweet fellowship for our All-Church Prayer Service at the Itasca campus. It was a powerful reminder that, although we worship in many locations, we are one church and united in our commitment to grow in faith, hope, and love through the gospel of Jesus Christ. After the prayer service, everyone was treated to hot dogs and kettle corn! It was a great evening of fellowship and celebration.



| SUMMER MISSIONS |

God is doing great things around the world and right in our backyard. Take a look at some of the ways God used people from The Orchard in missions this summer.



TURKEY Ministry That Won't Quit

Two teams were sent to Turkey this summer to spread the gospel. One team, led by Julie Bentle, ran the Open Gobe Adventure Camp for 80+ missionary and third-culture kids, then a Family Adventure Camp for missionary families to rest. A second team, led by Dave and Gina Udchik, hosted an English Club at Mozaik Cultural Center for 30+ Turkish, Russian, and Ukrainian children, and encouraged the local church through Bible studies. Please pray these ministries raise up gospel proclaimers!



ALBANIA A Perfect Report Card

With zero advertising, word of mouth brought record attendance to Durres, Albania's 8th annual children's Bible camp. A 13-person team led by Mike Young partnered with Durres Evangelical Church to teach 82 children the Ten Commandments, each lesson ending with breaking a Styrofoam "tablet." Missionary Lauren Rushiti then shared that only Jesus earned a perfect "report card," revealing her own failing one and that Jesus offered to trade His for it. One 9-year-old boy ran to a team member shouting, "Look, I passed!" Please pray this message resounds in their hearts toward salvation!



KOSOVO Why Wait?

In Gjilan, Kosovo, a Summer Kick-off English Camp welcomed 70+ children, mostly from Muslim families. Fifteen students led by Pastor Josh Newton (Barrington) partnered with Dardania Church, running workshops, games, and skits, bringing every frustration to the Lord each evening while two leaders prayed over every camper by name. Those prayers were answered when two sisters, ages 8 and 10, said they couldn't wait until 18 to become Christians. The students' reply: "Why wait?" They led both girls in prayer to receive Christ. God is at work in Kosovo, and He is building His church.



CHICAGO Reaching Out at the Welcome Center

Nine students led by Pastors Meritt Raup and Isaiah Kirkeeng (Arlington Heights) spent a day serving a ministry that's quietly built relationships in Chicago for years. Students met founders Tim and Dave at the Chicago Welcome Center, learning how they build friendships through English, citizenship, and Bible classes, then canvassed the neighborhood before sharing pizza and scripture with the team.

ORCHARD Kids A Summer of Growing Faith

This summer, children across The Orchard learned about Jesus, built friendships, and discovered what it means to follow Him.

ORCHARD KIDS WEEK | ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

Orchard Kids Week at Arlington Heights was a full week of fun, games, and meaningful conversations centered on courageously living out the gospel. During small group time, volunteers noted kids engaging in thoughtful discussion and asking great questions. One leader shared a favorite moment: a boy in her group asked, “Why can’t it be every week, like Orchard Kids Summer?” The week closed with a family night of worship, inflatables, Gaga Ball, and treats.

SUMMER BLAST | BARRINGTON

In June, Barrington kicked off summer with more than 125 campers and over 65 middle school volunteers. Kids grew in faith through games, worship, Bible teaching, and small group conversation, while volunteers were encouraged as they served. The week wrapped up with a family night featuring walking tacos, bounce houses, and ice cream.

ORCHARD KIDS SUMMER CAMP | VERNON HILLS

This year’s theme, “There is a God who cares,” shaped each day for the 45 kids led by more than 20 volunteers. About 30% of campers live nearby but don’t attend The Orchard - a reminder of how camp opens doors into the community. One mom, who doesn’t attend church and speaks no English, used Google Translate to share how thankful she was, and how her kids came home joyful and inspired. A family night with treats closed out the week.

ORCHARD KIDS WEEK | MARENGO

The laughter of 35 children mixed with the bleat of goats and moo of a Highland cow were the joyful sounds heard at Orchard Kids Week in Marengo. Over three days, kids dug into Psalm 23, learning how God faithfully cared for King David - and how our Good Shepherd never leaves us. The Marengo youth group brought the Bible to life through daily dramas, serving alongside the adult volunteers with joy. As one volunteer said: “It’s a beautiful thing when the body of Christ comes together to do His work.”



EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP FORUM | Developing Global Leaders for Gospel Impact



In May, Pastor Colin Smith joined nearly 1,000 pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders at the European Leadership Forum in Poland, where leaders from across Europe and beyond were strengthened through God's Word, encouraged, and trained for faithful gospel ministry.

Pastor Colin shared that the Lord met with them in meaningful ways as many spoke of being helped, challenged, and encouraged. Each day began in Scripture, focusing on the spiritual life of a godly leader and the truth that everything God does through His servants overflows from what He does in them.

The Orchard was represented by Balkan ministry partners Kujtim Rushiti of Durres, Albania; Ilir Stambolliu and Andi Dina of Tirana, Albania; Paulin and Violeta Veleciku of Gjilan, Kosovo; Shkelzen Halilaj of Gostivar, North Macedonia; and James and Renata Bultema of Malaga, Spain. Anthony Adams, International Director of Radstock Ministries, also attended.

The forum reflected four shared commitments: a high view of Scripture, deep dependence on the Holy Spirit, passionate commitment to mission, and strong commitment to the local church. These convictions are vital in Europe, where the collapse of communism has been followed by a powerful wave of secularism, yet a new generation is rising with a hunger for more.

These are days of great opportunity, and God is raising up faithful servants throughout the Balkans and beyond. The Orchard is privileged to partner with leaders who are serving churches, proclaiming the gospel, and developing others for ministry. Pastor Colin's visit was a reminder of the global scope of gospel work and the joy of investing in leaders making an impact for Christ.

What's Happening With Our Ministry Partners in The Balkans?



KUJTIM AND LAUREN RUSHITI | Durres, Albania | therushitifamily@gmail.com

Kujtim is pastor of the Durrës Evangelical Church and director of the American Language School, where together with their team they are focused on church planting, discipleship, and community outreach. A team from The Orchard comes alongside them every summer in this nominally Muslim city to reach over 80 children with biblical truth.



PAULIN AND VIOLETA VELECICU | Gjilan, Kosovo | paulinveleciku@gmail.com

Expanding the Kingdom of God by planting and strengthening churches among Albanian communities in Kosovo and the Preševo Valley in the Republic of Serbia, Paulin pastors the Dardania Evangelical Church in Gjilan. Each summer a team from The Orchard partners with them to share the gospel message at a day camp for kids and youth.



SHKELZEN AND KLODIANA HALILAJ | Gostivar, North Macedonia | shkelzenidheklodiana@gmail.com

Shkelzen, together with his wife Klodiana and their three sons, are church planting among Albanians in the city of Gostivar, North Macedonia. They use English classes, arts events, book fairs, camps and daily routines to gain a hearing for the Gospel. They coordinate regularly with various Albanian ministries and partner churches in the Radstock network to advance the gospel.

Pray for and encourage 70+ ministry partners by picking up a **Global Ministries Prayer Guide** at the **Welcome Desk** today!



THE ORCHARD
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UPCOMING

PREACHING SCHEDULE

Scan the code to see who's
preaching at each campus.

