



Focus on Europe

source: www.atomiun.be

Diversity and our call at the workplace

That Europe is diverse in language and people is a fact since ages past. But the diversity that has taken place in the last decades is broader and different (see photo). People from virtually every corner of the world immigrate to Europe for diverse reasons and under a variety of circumstances. One of the consequences of this is that the 'local' people are confronted with different systems of beliefs that represent this variety of foreign cultures. Their reaction, whether they are open to it or trying to hold tight to their cultural system, is independent of the large mix already established.

The Belgian soccer team



In secular Europe, the two places that better exemplify this are universities and the workplace. There, people have to interact and/or work together toward a common goal. This scenario shows us how important a Christian presence can be in the workplace since most of the time this will be the only place where non-believers will be exposed to the Christian faith. Therefore here is our call to be a presence in places with very little or no Christ-like presence. By doing our job with excellence and developing our God-given skills to serve the community, we will hopefully spark curiosity among our co-workers as for the reason that we do things the way we do. As Paul reminds us in Colossians 3:23-24, *"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward."*

📍 Where are our members? | Europe

Europe is currently the 18.26 Network's largest field, with our members spread across eight different countries: Belgium, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic, Romania, and Kosovo.

In the page below, I will share our journey as we embraced God's movements for us in His call to live, work and serve in Belgium. Pieter, a Dutchman, is a mechanical engineer working at a Belgian dredging company for 10 years. I am Brazilian and hold a PhD in pharmacy, while currently working part-time for the 18.26 Network. We have lived in Ghent for about 2 years with our children - Thomas and Sarah - and lived in Brussels for over 4 years in the 2010's.





Member Highlight | Annelise and Pieter in Ghent, Belgium



You may be asking yourself: why Belgium? Well, it was certainly not our first choice or not even a choice to start with. Instead, it happened as we trusted God to open/close doors through our professional calling, which was how we understood our calling in the kingdom. Pieter was hired by a Dutch company and I got a PhD position only two hours away from him (closer than an ocean away!) in Brussels, the capital of Belgium. But I surely was either too naive or too in love to not be aware that, culturally speaking, Belgium and the Netherlands are like apples and oranges. A country with three official languages, multiple layers of government, home to many European institutions and bursting with immigrants from several parts of the world, Belgium is truly unique and confusing at times!

Work & faith and the local church

The first Christian person I connected with happened to be Jud & Jan's daughter-in-law, Trisha, a member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church - the community we were also members of while in Brussels. To fully settle there, Pieter got a job in the Dredging industry in Dutch-speaking Belgium. That was a big adaptation period for him, as he did not expect so many differences in the neighboring country concerning work culture and the absence of Christian colleagues. In that sense, being part of an international community in Brussels was of great encouragement, as many of the members related to it had both the experience and patience to walk with us. Not only that, but this was the period where we got in touch with more specific work & faith literature, such as *Every Good Endeavour*, by Tim Keller, and also with Jud and Jan and their ministry. Although we understood in our minds that our vocation was our mission - with a strong heritage of the Reformational vision of work - navigating some of our modern society's views on work/happiness added to the many cultural and pressure-related issues that came with the job, and turned out to be very challenging. It was both beautiful and impacting to experience the church playing its caring role in reminding us of our identity in Christ, encouraging, and walking with us.



The Brazil chapter

After 4 years in Brussels, I had to go back to Brazil, as part of my commitment to the agency that funded my PhD. As much uncertainty as the transition times can bring, they also deepen our dependency on God - so we were ready for whatever awaited us on the other side of the Ocean!



Two beautiful children, a global pandemic, and moving away from family: a glimpse of how special and challenging our five years in Brazil were. We certainly experienced growth in unexpected ways amidst uncertain circumstances. Even so, we saw God's provision so clearly, as Pieter could keep working for the Belgian company as an expat and later at the Brazilian branch. Particularly, being close to my family for the birth of our children and in their early years was truly special. Still, as much openness as we had for Brazil, the doors for us to settle there kept on shutting, while we saw God clearly steering us back to Belgium.



Currently in **Ghent**, we are excited to be serving in the local church, building community at the children's school, and living out our faith at work. Being part of the *18.26 Network* is a beautiful confirmation of God's calling in our lives, as we pursue our vocational calling and add to the growth of this movement internationally. We would be more than happy to connect with you, in case you're considering vocational ministry abroad and see God moving you in that direction.



Prayer and Praise | *Europe*

1. Pray for a growing exposure and endorsement of the 18.26 Network ministry in the PCA as a valid alternative model to send out vocational missionaries in a desire to grow our base for potential members to join the 18.26 Network, who then could help us develop a stronger presence in Europe to promote this model in local European denominations.
2. Pray for the continent as a whole, as it faces war and threats, which is followed by great political and economic instability.
3. Praise God for recent openness and interest in the gospel, especially among Gen Z in Europe.
4. Praise God for the willingness of our members to live, work and serve in Europe, our largest continental field. Pray for wisdom and discernment as they navigate the different scenarios where they live, work, and serve.

Resource Hub | Book Recommendation

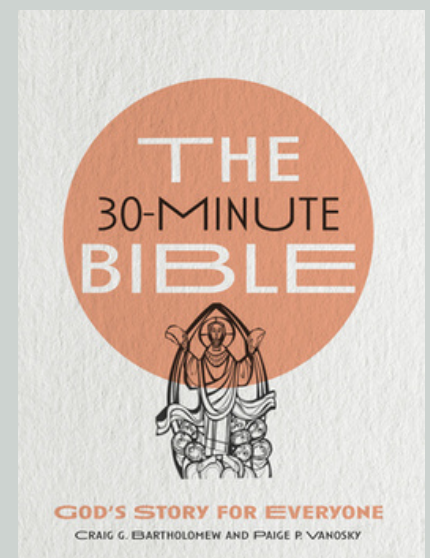
***The 30-Minute Bible, God's Story for Everyone* by Craig G. Bartholomew and Paige P. Vanosky**

Suggested by Tom Nachtergaele - 18.26 Network Europe COO

"We know about the Bible. We may know some Bible stories, or maybe we've even read large portions for ourselves. But what it's really all about? How do all the different pieces fit together?"

Without a sense of the big story the Bible is telling, we'll miss out on the good news God has for us. In *The 30-Minute Bible*, experienced Bible teachers Craig Bartholomew and Paige Vanosky present the story of Scripture in thirty short readings, each designed to take about half an hour. Each includes a passage from the Bible and a short chapter explaining how the passage fits into the Bible's wider narrative. Written in straightforward and clear language, the readings are accompanied by Brother Martin Erspamer's lovely illustrations."

Source: *Intervarsity Press*



For extra book resources please visit the website: www.30minutebible.com

For more information on the 18.26 Network, email mandy@1826network.com or visit our website: www.1826network.com



18.26 Network
A New Wave of Missions