

ecm outreach

newsletter of the european christian mission

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IS EUROPE DYING?

THE STATE OF EUROPE'S SPIRITUAL HEALTH



Inside...

Stories of God at work in Slovenia, Germany, Croatia and beyond

WE WANT TO SEE...

more people reaching UP to
receive Jesus' amazing love



more people
reaching OUT
to share Jesus'
love with those
in need



more people living IN caring
communities that show
Jesus' love



more organisations
working
TOGETHER
to love Europe
for Jesus



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HOW'S EUROPE?

WHY IS MISSION SO DIVERSE? *From the British Director*

Dear friends

I was born on the equator in central Africa. I grew up in an impoverished nation where education was limited, medical care was scarce and corruption was rife. The Democratic Republic of Congo was a very needy place.

Today I live in comfortable western Europe. Compared to Congo, Europe looks like heaven! In the UK, for example, we have access to free medical care and education, support for the most needy, a minimum wage and many other physical benefits. But if you peel back the skin of worldly comfort and look at Europe's soul, our continent is in a much worse spiritual condition than where I was raised.

Consider this fact: more than 12 million people in Congo are evangelical Christians. You could add up all the evangelicals in the UK, Germany, Netherlands, France, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, Switzerland, Spain and still not reach that number.

Please don't get me wrong – I care deeply about the problems which plague Congo to this day. Compassion should drive us to support well-planned development and aid programmes in the neediest parts of our hurting world.

But as Christians, Jesus called us to care about more than just the needs of the body. He challenged us to "Go and make disciples of all nations." And from my perspective, Europe still has a long way to go before it is full of churches that are full of people that are full of Jesus.

Thank you for helping us push on towards that goal.



Kent Anderson,
British Director





Projects News

EUROPE IN FOCUS

A glimpse of God at work across Europe today

Arabic speakers fill a German church

The recent increase in asylum seekers and migrants across Europe has resulted in an influx of different peoples wanting to know more about Christianity or seeking help from Christian communities. But can the church here in Europe reach them?

While many churches have been inspired by stories of people coming to Christ from different religious backgrounds, they often need help to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their new neighbours effectively.

A German church called Gospel House wanted to reach out to the refugees coming into their area. The congregation spearheaded a project which Vimal Vimalasekaren encouraged them to

initiate, by doing outreach to Arabic refugees on a Sunday evening each month. They provided culturally diverse food, worship and translation for the sermons by Arabic speaking believers.

As well as church members being encouraged spiritually, their numbers have grown considerably. Now Arabic speakers make up almost half of this German church congregation!



Showing love on Spain's pilgrim trail

Each year thousands of people make the 750 km Camino de Santiago pilgrimage from France into Spain. Charlie and Tania Deering explain how they spent a week ministering to those making this journey:

"We were part of a church team of 16 that helped Agapé missionaries run a hostel named 'La Fuente Del Peregrino'. We enjoyed meeting people from countries including the USA, Germany, Spain, Portugal, South Korea, the UK and Ireland. As they called in for a quick coffee and chat, or simply to use the bathroom and get an official pilgrim stamp, we soon realised that their reasons for doing the walk were many and varied.



"Regardless of their reason, each person was given a small leaflet entitled '5 Symbols from the Camino' that uses images like a backpack and walking stick to encourage deeper spiritual thoughts. Each evening the Jesus film was shown and there were many conversations about faith and life. 'Camino' means way or path. We thank God for the opportunities during this week to pray for people and talk about the only 'Camino' to God."

Mercy ministry bears fruit in Greece

"The mercy ministry of our church is one of the best ways to fulfil the great commission of the church, says Pastor Pavlos Dimitriadis of the Greek Evangelical Church of Piraeus. "Feeding the hungry, giving clothes to the needy, showing love to the marginalised is a ministry that is very dear to the heart of our Lord, Jesus Christ!"

"The mercy ministry has for 5 years now motivated our church to serve and disciple the homeless and immigrants," he continues. "Since we started the mercy ministry 5 years ago we have another congregation double our size to disciple!"

"Our mercy ministry has the goal to see the people that we serve being transformed in the name of Jesus Christ. Our means for that to accomplish our goal is to lead the people to the Bible, to teach them to pray. We are working together as a church and we show that we love, care and respect them. In addition we try to form a multi cultural community from people that are here in Europe. In our church we have people from all over the world: Santo Domenico, Brazil, Peru, Germany, Hong Kong, Holland, Finland and Albania. Our church from all the nations disciples all the nations!"



NewsBite

Never too old: "I love God, the English language and travel," says short-termer Bernie Reid from Coleraine, "so with an opportunity to combine all three I gladly went to help with English classes in Kosovo for two weeks. My main task was to help the little ones with their reading and vocabulary. At '77 years young' each trip abroad could potentially be my last, so to those younger I say:



'Go! Fill the earth with people who tell the Good News – news that brings peace, purpose and meaning to life.'

On national TV:

Last issue we gave an update on a summer camp for foster children in Croatia led by local pastor Jonatan Vukov. He has now helped set up the House of Opportunity to assist young adults leaving state care at age 18. This two-year programme was featured on national Croatian TV, providing Jonatan the opportunity to explain how it helps young adults develop life skills required for successful independent living.

Changing lives in Spain:

Weekly clubs focusing on activities such as conversational English, aerobics for ladies and assisting children with homework help build relationships between Christians and local people in Alcala de Henares, Spain. Jules Mercer-Wilson gives an insight saying, "Praise God for what he is doing now. Members of two families who attend the kids club have now made a profession of faith. I meet with the 11 year-old daughter once a week as well as a 15 year-old believer who I am preparing to disciple the younger girl."



Missionary focus

WHY SLOVENIA?

Called to where the need is great

When asked where they think missionaries should go today, many people say places like Africa, India or South America. Few would suggest Slovenia, although it's one of the world's most unevangelised countries. Sarah Deacon explains why she has just moved there.

"I like having a plan. I like being organised and so it wasn't easy for me to go into a situation where I wasn't exactly sure what I'd be doing. That's why I was comfortable with feeling God was leading me to work in archaeology, with maybe a short-term mission trip in holiday times. But on my first holiday to Slovenia in January 2016 I fell in love with the country and its people. God had a different plan for me.

"I can look back and see how God was preparing me for my move to Slovenia, which came in May 2018. One factor is the great need here. Only one in 1000 people in Slovenia is an evangelical believer. Slovenia's traditional nominal Catholicism is giving way to a rapid spread of secularism across the nation.

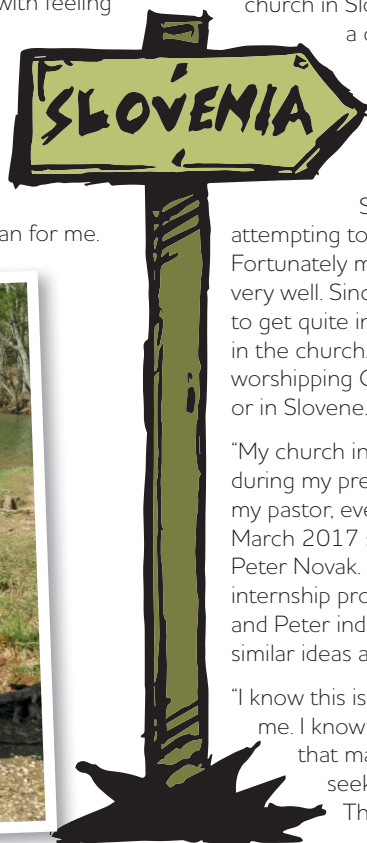
"Now that I'm here I'll be working at Reformirana Evangelijska Cerkev (REC), a church in Slovenia's capital, Ljubljana. I'll be

a church intern/ministry trainee with four main strands to my role: language learning, personal Bible study, youth work and anything else I can do with limited

Slovene (although I have been attempting to learn it for over a year). Fortunately many people here speak English very well. Since arriving, I have also been able to get quite involved with the music ministry in the church. It is a great joy to see people worshipping God together whether in English or in Slovene.

"My church in Swindon has been helpful during my preparation stage. Paul Williams, my pastor, even visited Slovenia with me in March 2017 so he could meet REC's pastor, Peter Novak. As my home church has run an internship programme for a few years, Paul and Peter independently came up with very similar ideas as to what I should be doing.

"I know this is where God has been leading me. I know that I am not in this alone, but that many people are with me as I seek to serve God in this new place. Thank you!"



WHERE'S THE DEEPEST NEED?

Europe's spiritual health in five statistics



How does the spiritual state of Europe today compare with other parts of the world?

As many British churches have links with ministries in Africa, this article will use five statistics to look at how these two neighbouring continents view God today.

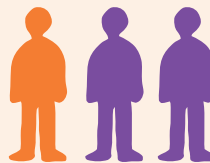
1. How easy is it to find an evangelical?

If you were to visit Uganda today and walk down the street asking people about their faith, you would find that on average one in every three people you meet is an evangelical. Praise God that the church has taken such firm root there in less than 150 years!

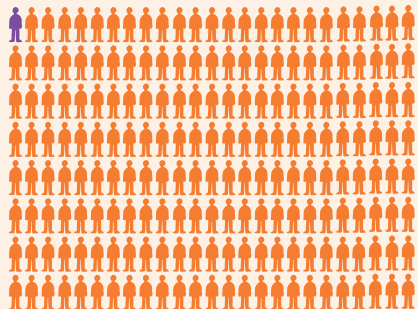
How does this compare to Albania? Albania has Christian history stretching back to the early days of the church history and many believe that the apostle Paul took the gospel himself. But if you made a walk around Albania today, you would have to talk to 200 people on average before you found a single evangelical!

So if you want to find a Christian easily, go to Uganda not Albania.

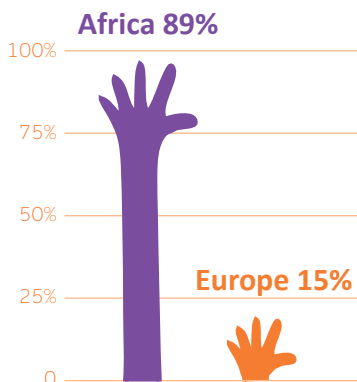
Based on statistics in Operation World, one of the most reliable reference sources on the state of Christianity around the world.



Uganda



Albania



From 'Being Christian in Western Europe',
Pew Research Center, 29 May 2018

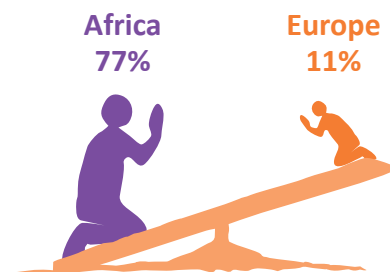
2. How many are sure God exists?

'Being Christian in Western Europe' asked those who said they believed in God "how certain they are about their belief." Only 15% of those living in Western Europe today are 'absolutely' certain God exists.

At first glance you may think, "Wow! That's not what I would have expected." But how does this compare to those living on the African continent?

When Pew Research Centre did similar research in sub-Saharan Africa, they discovered that 89% of people there "believe in God with absolute certainty".

So if you want to find someone who really believes in God, go to Africa not Europe.



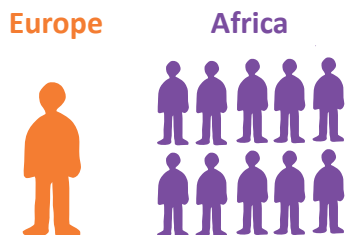
From 'Being Christian in Western Europe',
Pew Research Center, 29 May 2018

3. How many pray every day?

Belief is one thing, but turning faith into action is quite another. Pew Research Centre also asked people how often they prayed: daily, occasionally, seldom or never. Their finding was that "just one in ten people (11%) across the 15 Western European countries surveyed say they pray daily, while nearly four times as many... say they never pray."

Pew goes on to say "rates of daily prayer in the region are very low compared with several other regions surveyed..." In sub-Saharan Africa they discovered that 77% of people pray daily. That is seven times the frequency found in Europe!

So if you want to find someone who prays regularly, go to Africa not Europe.



Based on statistics in Operation World

4. How many evangelicals are there?

Europe has been at the heart of "Christendom" for centuries. But as church attendance in Europe struggles and the church grows in places like Africa, how many Christians are to be found "here" compared to "there"?

The answer is once again quite stark. There are slightly more than 18 million evangelicals living in all of Europe. But in Africa there are today more than 182 million evangelicals!

That means that for every one evangelical Christian in Europe there are ten believers in Africa!

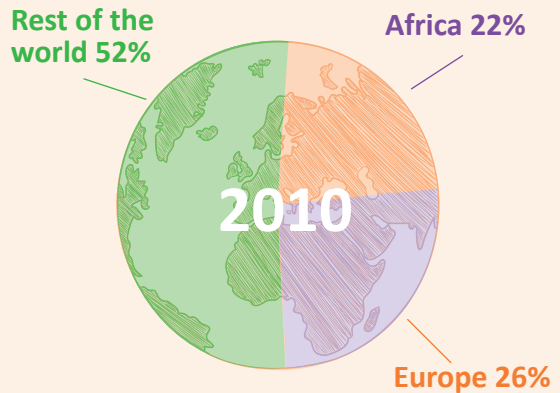
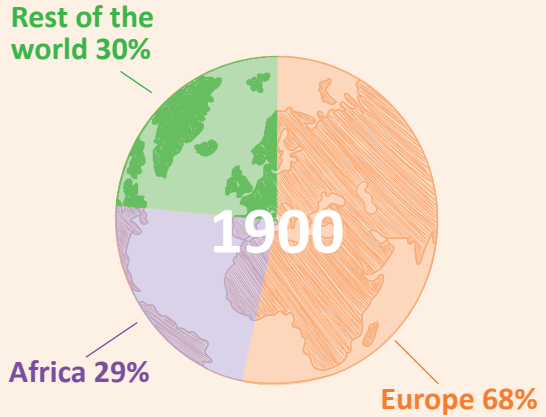
5. Church growth and decline

Praise God for the explosion of church growth in other parts of the world. Much of this happened during the last century as missionaries, often sent out from Europe and North America, took the gospel and helped plant indigenous church movements around the world.

This change is clearly seen in Africa, which in 1900 possessed less than 2% of the world's Christian population. But by 2010 almost 22% of all those claiming to be Christian were Africans.

But as the church expanded in places like Africa, it was shrinking back here at home. In 1900 Europe contained more than 68% of the world's Christian population. By 2010 this had dropped to less than 26%.

So if you want to find empty churches easily, look in Europe not Africa.



According to Centre for Policy Studies, 2017

So what does this all mean?

When faced with statistics such as those shown above, there is little choice but to conclude that Europe **must** now be considered a strategic mission field.

If you want to see Europe full of churches, full of people, full of Jesus then please get involved. Help us take the love of Jesus in word and deed back to where it once was strong.



PUTTING THE BALL

Brazilian footballers win hearts for Christ

Everyone everywhere appears to love Brazilian football. So when a team of professional Brazilian footballers, who are also Christians, recently toured the Balkans the doors were open for them to share the gospel.

The dream of veteran Brazilian footballers coming to the Balkans began when Emanuel Siqueira, a Brazilian missionary who has served in Croatia for 6 years, met team leader Bruno Brito in Rio de Janeiro. This led to an initial visit last year, followed up this May when a team of 16 calling themselves Missionaries of the Ball visited Croatia, Hungary and Ukraine.

Uelliton Baptista, team goalie and Coordinator of Missionaries of the Ball explained, "The purpose of this ministry is to bring joy and peace through football to many places across the globe. Often, because of this approach to

ministry, we have the opportunity to perform in various places such as schools, festivals and colleges. Through these events our goal is to bring hope through God to people who need him."

In Varaždin, Croatia, they were part of a 22 hour long music and sports festival covered by national television. During the news story team leader Bruno Brito shared, "In my professional career I have played for many European clubs. I am thankful that as an athlete I was able to play football in this event. But the true joy, that every one of us here has, is to praise and glorify God."

During their six days in Croatia the football veterans played the city clubs from Rijeka (who came second in the Croatian league), Čakovec and Varaždin, as well as in other special matches. Each match provided the opportunity to share the gospel. Along the way the Brazilians took



IN BALKANS

time out to meet with local mayors and build relationships wherever possible.

Stephen Bell, who has worked in Croatia for 17 years and helped organise their visit, explains, "This was a very different kind of ministry, but one which meant Jesus could be proclaimed in new places we could never reach on our own."

The Brazilians then visited Hungary where they played three more matches and spoke in three schools. At one talk 44 people came to Christ! 40 others made commitments at other schools. They then spent one day in Ukraine where 15 more people accepted Jesus.

The Missionaries of the Ball plan to return to the Balkans in 2019, staying even longer this time in order to add in time for a football training camp. Thanks to God for the unique abilities He gives to each of us to use in building His kingdom.





Special focus

LEADING LEADERS

Helping leaders change Europe and the world

Ron Anderson has a big vision. After 39 years church planting in Spain with ECM, he now leads the Lausanne Church Planting Network. We found out more during the following interview.



**Hi Ron.
So what's your
'big vision'?**

We serve a big God and so I like to think big. Simply put, we want to see effective 'collaborative national church planting platforms' in every

country of Europe and the world. This will require building synergy between existing church planting influencers and their respective ideas and resources within each nation, and by providing the structure to make a collaborative national vision.

This should increase effectiveness in church planting and accelerate the multiplication of new churches, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of disciples and churches in each nation.

Wow! So how have you started to roll-out this approach?

As I was transitioning into this role 5 years ago I discovered that many Christian leaders do want to work together, but first they need a safe place to talk. So I took the daring step of inviting 30 key denominational leaders in Spain together for a day to look at the state of Spanish church planting. As they spoke around

tables they began to understand that they were all facing the same issues. By the end they agreed that they needed to meet again in six months' time. This gave rise to a new sense of unity which has materialised into what is today a national church planting platform for Spain.

A year later we tried the same approach in Croatia. When challenged with the facts of the lack of growth and unity within their nation, one of the leaders attending said, "Unless we learn to work together, we will not reach Croatia for Christ." That remark sparked a new beginning and within a year those leaders had established a national church planting platform for Croatia!

I am amazed at how this low-cost but effective method is helping change attitudes and behaviour and is producing effective synergy in terms of church planting.

How has working with ECM prepared you for this?

For the past 40 years ECM has been a pioneer in developing the concepts of best-practice for European church planting. ECM's long-term commitment to grass-roots church planting, together with its non-denominational character, enables it to be a credible voice in the development of national church planting platforms. The fact that some 30 European nations are in the process of developing a national church planting process is evidence

that God is doing something unique right now in the area of church planting.

How does this relate to changes within the church?

The Global Church is faced with the new challenges of post-modern, post-Christian and post-truth ways of thought. Christendom, which at one time was dominant in the West, is now competing with every other religion for a place on the front row. In addition to these outside threats, the church has been less than effective in its fragmented ways of doing mission. We firmly believe that the church has its greatest impact when leaders create personal relationships with other leaders in unity (see John 17). When the church in a whole nation works together to plant new churches, the gates of hell cannot stop the power of God that is unleashed.

How is this sense of unity building?

In Latin America, over the past few years we have held over a dozen consultations with church leaders in Colombia, Mexico, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

In Africa, we are planning to launch a pilot Church Planting Consultation that gathered key leaders from Kenya, Malawi, Zambia, Burundi and Tanzania. The objective was to

model a consultation, with the aim that each return to their respective countries to develop their own collaborative national church planting movements.

And is there good news for Europe?

There's great news in Europe. The existing platforms in places like Spain and Croatia are continuing to expand. We're already meeting with leaders in Portugal and are moving on to gathering key leaders together in countries including Albania, Bosnia, Serbia, Greece, Poland, Hungary, Belgium and Austria. In Europe this is being done in collaboration with NC2P (National Church Planting Process), of which I am a founding member. We held an event with leaders representing 30 European nations in Berlin in February, which was a major step forward and a sure sign of these leaders' commitment to reach the lost across their nations.

Thank you, Ron. May the Lord bless the unity and impact of this new approach.

We've set up a special fund called **Time for Change** to help strategic projects like this transform Europe. To make a gift please use the enclosed response slip on the back page.



“I am amazed at how this low-cost but effective method is helping change attitudes and behaviour and is producing effective synergy in terms of church planting.”



A GOOD LEGACY

How I want to be remembered

I was recently at a thanksgiving service for the life of an inspiring Christian woman. It started me thinking about my legacy – how I want to be remembered. Here are the top five things I hope to leave behind when I move on to heaven:

1. A legacy of encouraging and inspiring others:

Jesus said that in this world we would have problems, and he was right. That's why I try to bring hope, peace and joy to the people around me. And I know about those because of the Bible.

2. A legacy of listening to and living out the Bible:

God's Word has proved true throughout my life and in every situation. I want to pass on a love for it, and a trust in it, to those around me. Knowing the promises in the Scriptures determine how we look at all aspects of life.

3. A legacy of looking up rather than down:

The world can be an alluring place at times. But if you look up into heaven and see the treasures stored for us there, the earth's treasures pale in comparison. Knowing what heaven offers changes how we want to live now.

4. A legacy of helping make disciples:

Only in becoming more like Jesus have I become a better person. And my best investment

in others has been when I have helped them to strive to be more like Christ, too. Having Jesus' character affects every decision you make.

5. A legacy of investing my time, effort and treasures in the kingdom:

It's sobering to think about it, but someday my garden will be overgrown, my home redecorated in someone else's style and my work successes forgotten. But everything that I have invested in God's kingdom will endure and through God's grace continue to bear fruit.

That is the legacy I want to leave.
A legacy of more people full of Jesus.



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