

Autumn / Winter 2019

ecm outreach

newsletter of the european christian mission

www.ecmbritain.org

EVERY SOUL MATTERS



Inside...

Stories of God at work
in Belgium, Croatia,
the Netherlands
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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GOD LOVES EVERYONE

Thanks for joining in - The British Director

Dear friends

Can you remember the moment when you first realised that "God really does love ME"?

That special instant in time when you finally understood that not only does God love everyone, but God loves every **ONE**. That while He knows all the billions of people spread around our world, He also knows your heart, your pains and your dreams. God became personal to you.

In the same way that the Father loves you, He cares about every person in France, in Albania, in Sweden... everywhere!

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us..." 1 John 3.1a (NIV)

That love is why ECM exists. God drew each of us to Himself and then sent us out to tell others about all that He has for them. Thanks to people like you, who pray and support our work, we have the opportunity to take this love out across our continent in words and in deeds.

This issue of ECM Outreach is full of stories of people who have encountered this radical and infinite love of God through the ministry of ECM. We hope that as you read their experiences you will be reminded of how much He cares for you too. And that you will be challenged all the more to share Jesus with those you meet this week.

Thank you again for your part in sharing the love of Christ with Europe.

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5.8 (NIV)



Kent Anderson,
British Director

Stay up to date on what's going on in ministry across Europe with Twitter and Facebook for quick updates, YouTube for short videos, and of course ongoing news and more is always available on our website.
See you online!





Projects News

EUROPE IN FOCUS

A glimpse of God at work across Europe today



Freedom in prison

Trapped by a dangerous and destructive drugs cartel, an impoverished mother of four young children had ended up being forced to carry drugs into Spain from her native Peru.

When she was caught and imprisoned in Spain, miles from home and deep in shame, the outlook for her and her family was bleak.

Yet, with the demonstration of Christ's love through a dedicated prison outreach ministry, she has found a new freedom and hope within prison. Not just for her either – her family 4000 miles away have made a new commitment to follow the Lord as they have also been ministered to from Spain. Now they are trusting God with their future too!

Flash back! Remembering the Balloon Man

Some of our faithful readers may recall the touching story of Maurizio from Umag, Croatia – the 'balloon man'. He met a mission team as he was selling balloons near the beach and came very close to suicide one evening, until he felt urged to speak to the team. He accepted Jesus' transforming love some weeks later and the following year was overflowing with joy as his wife Ruza also gave her life to the Lord.

Tragically a week later Maurizio died of natural causes. The gospel was preached to over 100 people at his funeral and Ruza is continuing to grow in faith and we thank everyone for their prayers for his friends and family. This is the town where ECM International is planning to hold the next biennial conference in 2020, with a population of over 7,000 people – so imagine the probability of meeting Daniel, the Quality Manager of the hotel conference centre, only to discover he's Maurizio's brother! Please keep praying for Umag and the legacy of Maurizio's testimony in that town!

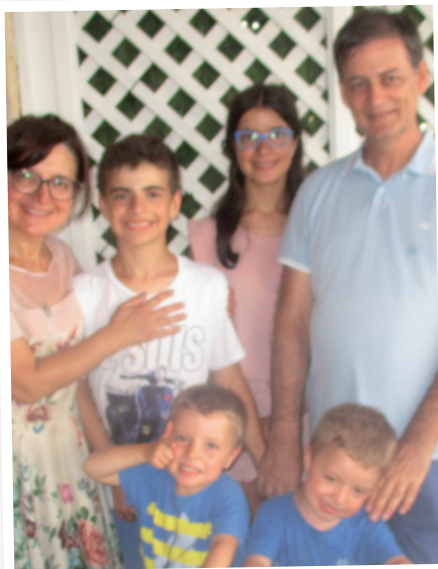


Reaching the multitude virtually

Richard and Pinuccia Wilson, based in Italy, have been reaching out using the internet for over 20 years by creating a website 'La Parola' (meaning 'The Word'). Thousands of Italians have had their hearts, minds and souls touched by reading, studying and understanding the Bible. Common questions about the Bible are answered, there's a synopsis of the Gospels, a Greek-Italian dictionary and much more.

Two thirds of site visitors are now mobile phone users. Currently there are approximately 70,000 of Richard's Bible app on Italian phones and many more desktop computers.

Truly a remarkable story of how using specialist talents can be used to bless a multitude of people!



"A BIBLE APP IS
DOWNLOADED
EVERY 30 MINS ON
AVERAGE!"

"THERE ARE A
MILLION PAGE
VIEWS PER MONTH
ON AVERAGE!"

NewsBite

Scares From Bears!

A worker in Finland was very thankful for prayer throughout this summer as all the scouting camps went well, despite two actual bears roaming close to the children's camp one night!

"God kept us safe during that incident and also from any accidents. At the camp I also had a very unexpected opportunity to witness to someone. Please join us in praying for this person to start thinking seriously about God, and that the children will grow in their faith."



Saved from broken brakes!

Delyth Sutton from Pozoblanco, Spain, is also very thankful to God for His protection of the minibus driver and residents of the Good Samaritan drug rehabilitation centre. They had been to Cordoba to collect food from the food bank. They unloaded the food at the church and returned to the centre. However, as they drove down to the entrance of the house, a very steep winding slope, the brakes on the minibus failed! To prevent a major incident the driver had to steer into the walls of the slope. Praise God that no one was hurt and the biggest problem is replacing the minibus.

Thank you to all our praying supporters who may never know how much we rely on God's protection. Please keep it up!

STUMBLING TOWARDS GOD

David updates us on a poignant story about a young refugee in Belgium and his desire to seek God despite the odds stacked against him.

"How you doing?" I enquired.
"Not well sir," he replied, lifting up his sleeve to reveal multiple scars on his inside arm. I gave him my card and said, "If you ever want to talk about it just give me a call."

I had met **W*** a few months earlier at the school where I was teaching. W was a young man from Iraq who had come to Belgium a few years earlier as a refugee. I had only had a brief conversation with him on the train home, but it was enough for him to reach out to me when we met a second time.

"Can we meet up?" he said.
"Sure! Let's grab a coffee in town". I had been praying for God to lead me to those who were seeking. Perhaps I would be able to offer him some hope and comfort by telling him about Jesus.

He cut straight to the chase.
"I couldn't find your phone number but I looked you up online and found the website of your church. I read and listened to everything. This Jesus who died on the cross made me cry. Tell me, how do I become a Christian?"

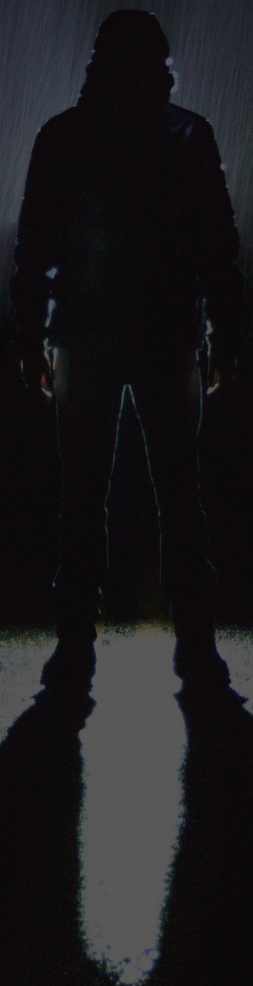
"Do you know what it means to be a Christian?" I said.

A quick overview of the Gospel followed. "Since coming to Belgium no-one has helped me other than the Christians" he said. "They are kind and loving people. Tell me, how do Christians pray?" "Just speak to God as your Father and pray in the name of Jesus" I replied, then he falteringly prayed.

I encouraged him to read the Bible and pray to Jesus every day yet it wasn't long before the troubles started. His cousin discovered the Arabic Bible I had given him. His uncles came to his house and beat him up. I tried to find him a safe house but couldn't find him anything permanent nearby.

This was two years ago. Since then W has struggled to go to church. He has wrestled with alcohol and drug addictions. He has been in and out of psychiatric hospitals (as a very young man he witnessed some horrible atrocities committed by ISIS) but through it all he maintains his faith and love for Jesus. I look back with disappointment and confusion. My hopes for a fairytale story of transformation did not materialize, but I know God has a plan for W and I continue to watch out for the work of the Holy Spirit in his life.

** Name protected*





Short-term mission

MISSION MALAGA

Sun, sea... and the poorest migrants

Elisha Roberts spent 12 days in Málaga, a city on the south coast of Spain known for its golden beaches and great weather. Rather than hitting the beach, Elisha volunteered as a short-term worker at Diez42, a project serving some of the poorest people in Málaga: migrants. Here's what Elisha wrote about her experience:



Situated less than 80 miles from mainland Africa, Málaga receives thousands of migrants each year. These people have often left family and friends fleeing poverty,

corruption and unemployment. They arrive in an unfamiliar city with an alien culture and language, often feeling isolated and disorientated. Where can they go for support? How can they make friends? Diez42 is the answer for more than 200 families served by the centre on a weekly basis.

"I spent my mornings at Diez42 distributing food parcels to families. Yet Diez42 is more than a foodbank. A significant amount of my time was dedicated to an English club for 5 to 12 year olds. From preparing daily craft activities, to decorating the classroom, to playing games with the children it was extremely rewarding to help lead this club. Around 20 children came each day. Amongst other activities they heard the gospel, many for the first time! The childrens' mothers had their own craft sessions whilst the English club took place. This allowed relationships to be built, helping the mothers to learn new skills and gain confidence in their Spanish.

My experience at Diez42 was incredible. If you're able to go on a short-term mission do make the most of the opportunity. Never before had I spoken to people from five different continents in the space of two hours. Never before had I witnessed such dedication to sharing the love of Jesus. I'm very grateful for my time with the wonderful team at Diez42."



Short term Individual & Team Placements

Tailor-made opportunities available to combine individual gifts, experience and passions with the wide-ranging needs of ECM teams in Europe. Examples include:

Serving a disadvantaged community in Germany.
Working with refugees and immigrants in Spain.
Serving as a media intern in Ireland.

Visit www.shortterm.eu to find out more!

A SCHOOL REBORN IN

The transformation of a Maastricht primary school

Roland and Carolien Smith have been working with ECM since 2006 in Maastricht. In this story Roland writes about the remarkable transformation of a primary school from a place threatened with closure to a vibrant living example of faith at work.

"An increasingly falling birth rate and cuts in the education budget threatened the closure of one of only two primary schools in the province where there is still a Christian who teaches children the Bible.

When Christian parents and children prayed, 'How can this precious school survive?', the Holy Spirit revealed some creative solutions. One of these was to plan a variety of natural play and educational areas where children could learn about and care for God's creation.



“How can
this precious
school survive?”



THE NETHERLANDS

Amazingly at that time '*Serve the City*' was founded – a volunteer organisation that provides meaningful opportunities for people to get involved in a variety of ways in their own city. Saving the school became their kick off event.

Volunteers and parents helped clean up the school playground, and natural play areas were created. Local businesses, a trust and the local council gave generously. The soil was improved for planting and the children learnt about bulbs and sowing flowers, planting vegetables and growing strawberries. This natural playground is now mature and the school, at long last, is not under threat of closure.



The school has been totally transformed. Nowadays it's a thriving place where Christian parents can meet non-Christian parents. The RE teacher takes her classes in the allotment area and the school has rediscovered its original Christian values. Over the years since 2015, when the scheme was begun, many have prayed for this project that is finally complete. Praise be to God."

Supporter Spotlight

EVERY GOOD SEED

Witness the transformation of a loyal ECM supporter

Mike Coffin has been a dedicated supporter of ECM as far back as at least 1994. This is his story of how the seeds of faith were sown with the help of Peter Knowlson, now a long serving ECM missionary, and forged a friendship that continues to this day.

"I grew up in West London in a loving family who had me christened and gave me Godparents. They encouraged me to go to a church school, and even Sunday School, although my Dad explained that none of it was true!

I prayed throughout my teens to know if any of it was factual and waited for someone to turn up with answers...

I really came to faith in Southampton while at university in 1979. I had been going along to a local hippy 'commune' that seemed to lack any genuine peace and hope.

Hence I was thankful when someone knocked on my door and invited me to the mid-year student mission.

That person was a young Peter Knowlson who looked very well dressed, but I was willing to overlook that! Tellingly he was prepared to tell me that I was probably not a Christian, and that if I was my Christian life was going backwards from what I had

said. I liked him a lot from that day on. And so began my spiritual transformation.

When I came to faith I joined *Navigators*, a ministry that shares the gospel of Jesus and helps people grow in their relationship with Him through life-to-life discipleship. Peter invited me to join one of their study groups.

Martin Cooper, who was very good at seeing the potential in people, was running the Navigators in Southampton. I was given a young mentor to help me at first, and was then assisted by Peter Knowlson. He invited me to join one of their study groups. We also shared a room together in my second year and Peter proved to be a man of great patience.

I became a nurse after one long evening of prayer for 'direction', which enabled me to stay with the local church and Navigator Bible studies, which was never a long-term plan but gave me a better grounding in God's word.

I prayed further and found a church in Tadworth in 1982 when the mid-Surrey NHS offered me a good study package. I worked for them 4 days a week as a trainee Accountant.



BEARS GOOD FRUIT

The Navigator training helped me to take on roles in our local church over the next twenty years, including study group leadership, mentoring, two deaconate roles, and parenthood. I married a Christian nurse in 1990 and we now have two girls, who serve in churches in the Home Counties.

We visited the work of the Knowlsons in Southern Spain in the early 90's before they had children. It seemed that working in Europe was harder than I had expected in many ways, but they seemed to take to it well. We continue to be impressed by the work that God is enabling people to do there in a fairly difficult area.

I gained a broader understanding of Christian relief and development work in 2005 when I was asked to join Tearfund for a month supporting their accounting. I enjoyed it very much and was asked to stay for another few months.

This pattern continued until they realised that they needed to give me a permanent contract. I eventually finished my role in their International Team in December 2018 after 13 jam-packed years. I visited 8 countries that tend not to appear in holiday adverts, led many meetings, and

preached in some hostile environments.

I am now 59 and most aspects of fund raising and accounting continue to fascinate me. Currently I help to run the men's outreach work at our church. Like Peter Knowlson did to me many years ago, I have to be prepared to tell some men that they are probably not Christians, and that if they are, their Christian life is going backwards.

I enjoy meeting Peter and Kate whenever I can. I am never sure what God wants me to learn from them next."

Read about the Knowlsons in our Missionary focus feature (p14)



GOSPEL ON THE ROAD

Travel tales of spiritual transformation. Every soul matters.

For more than 10 years David and Linda James have taken international teams to the seaside resort of Umag, Croatia. This is the story of Karla and others, and her remarkable gift of testimony to other seekers.

"This year we were a team of 19 mission enthusiasts from Austria, Germany, UK, Slovenia and Portugal." Linda explains.

"After two days of preparation in Villach, Austria, we travelled the long road to Umag, Croatia. We were out on the promenade that evening using a mix of music, pantomime and street sermons to attract people. Often 15 to 30 people stopped and watched our presentations and we were able to talk to them afterwards. We also had a kids' programme. It's amazing how we could use little things like performing simple illusion tricks, playing music or serving tea to help people open up and talk about faith. We thanked the Lord many times for His perfect timing.

Karla came to faith two years ago in the Life Church in Villach and signed up for the Umag trip. We were very excited by this because she is originally from Slovenia and we meet many Slovenes in Umag. However, for various reasons, she repeatedly said that she had changed her mind and would not come, mainly because she felt so insecure. She was in a spiritual battle. David and I both had several conversations with her to encourage her, the last time being as late as the day before the group departed. And she amazingly decided to come!



It was only the second night on the promenade, Saturday, and the courageous Karla shared her testimony to three people from Slovenia. That led to her telling them about God's gospel. **All three then gave their lives to Jesus!** We knew then that God had a mission for her. Furthermore on Monday Tobias, who was also with us, had a great conversation with two other Slovenes. He brought Karla in on the conversation in order to make sure they understood the gospel correctly. They had, and so Tobias prayed a prayer of conversion sentence by sentence in English. Karla translated it and the couple repeated it with all their heart. Praise the Lord!

IN CROATIA

The entire team had many other ways to pass on God's love. The Teebus (a mobile café) workers Katja, Amos and Jephta were in their element as they talked with people on the promenade or at the two beach volleyball tournaments we hosted.



Some of the tourists are in Umag every year at this time and we have developed friendships with them. We pray that these people will hear the gospel wherever they are and that we will meet them again next year and continue to witness to them.



We thank the Lord for all the participants and pray that they have grown in faith. We hope and pray that some of the team members who live locally to us in Austria will also join the Teebus Team in Villach."





Missionary focus

LEADING TO JESUS

'The way, the truth and the life...'



We recently caught up with Peter and Kate Knowlson, long-serving ECM missionaries called to Spain.

Hi Peter and Kate!

So just how long is 'long-serving'?

Peter: Well we've been involved in church-planting for over 30 years now, so a fair while!

Tell us a little about the place God has called you to?

Spain is certainly a religious country, and people on the whole are aware that God is somewhere in the picture and have an element of faith in their lives. What we don't see is people wanting a real relationship with Jesus – something where people can grow and develop and get to know God better for themselves.

So how do you address that?

Kate: That's key for us to share with people, that knowing God personally makes a difference to every day and to how we live and relate to each other. We put a lot of emphasis on people getting to know God for themselves through reading the Bible – through the church, in groups and one-to-one.

And Peter, you also teach in Bible college?

Yes, that's something I really love, it's such a

great opportunity to be preparing the next generation of leaders who will help others in the future. We've been involved now in three different church plants and it can be really slow at times yet with the students you can easily see them growing and coming to grips with scripture for themselves. It's really, really important to recognize that teaching the Bible doesn't have to just be at conference level or pulpit level; relating to people one-to-one requires the same biblical rigour as when preaching to a congregation.

What would you say to someone sensing a call to be a missionary?

Kate: I asked a missionary that once and look where I am! He said, join a prayer group, study some language and now I would add get some people who care for you involved in discerning God's will for you. Sometimes people can worry about what they're leaving behind but when we follow Him to the things He calls us to, He can really use us. God has cared for us and our four boys, who have been brought up in Spain. We're doing well and thank God for His faithfulness to us. God can really use you in so many ways – see where He leads!

What about your work now?

Peter: We'll see how God continues to lead us. We want to finish well in the valley where we are the Pastors and we're hoping to see God develop a community of believers in the town where we now live. It will then be their mature witness to what it is to live for the Lord Jesus Christ that will help others.

Come over and help us, we'll be pleased to see you in Spain!

Help **CHANGE EUROPE**

If you feel God is calling you to reach out more please consider:

- Thank you for every way that you help to let every soul know that they matter!



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☐ ECM's monthly prayer diary by ☐ post ☐ email

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