

SPRING 2023

ECM LIFE

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION IRELAND
NEWSLETTER

A photograph of a person from behind, walking down a narrow, cobblestone street in a European city. The person has reddish-brown hair tied in a bun and is wearing a light grey hoodie and a large, dark green backpack with a tan-colored top flap. The street is lined with old, colorful buildings in shades of orange, red, and brown. A bicycle is parked on the left side of the street. The word "EQUIP" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

EQUIP

... TO EQUIP HIS PEOPLE FOR WORKS OF SERVICE
SO THAT THE BODY OF CHRIST MAY BE BUILT UP
EPHESIANS 4:12

ECM IRELAND

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION IRELAND
IS AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL,
EVANGELICAL, MISSIONARY ORGANISATION
WORKING IN EUROPE.

ECM'S MISSION IS TO



EQUIP,
CONNECT
AND MULTIPLY
FOLLOWERS OF
JESUS

THROUGH
DISCIPLESHIP
AND

CHURCH
PLANTING
ACROSS
EUROPE

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER

BY GEOFF DONALDSON



Knowing where to start my first letter as ECM Ireland Director was made easier when I saw the theme was 'EQUIP', an aspect of ministry I am passionate about. Through previous roles in Church leadership, theological education and mission, my heart has very much been to see people set free to serve. I also have a long-distance running background and I am drawn to Biblical pictures about running such as, Hebrews 12:1-2, 'let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us'.

These verses point to the importance of perseverance in the Christian life. This perseverance is something relevant to any Christian, but is also crucial for our ECM Ireland missionaries serving across 11 European countries. How can we equip our brothers and sisters to run well, and finish well, in life, faith and ministry?

Part of the answer comes in our priority to EQUIP (the other ECM key words of CONNECT and MULTIPLY will feature in later editions of ECM Life in 2023). Examples of ways we seek to EQUIP our people include:

- **Spiritual development** - being attentive to how we can help them 'throw off everything that hinders' in their personal spiritual growth.
- **Training** - creating opportunities for them to develop the effectiveness of their ministry and leadership, including the key areas of Church planting and discipleship.

- **Caring** - in ways that will help them not just survive, but to thrive in life and ministry.

This task of equipping requires the support of all those associated with ECM Ireland. Join us in praying for our ECM Ireland members, that we can serve them well in equipping them for their ministry. In this edition, we have a specific country focus on Slovenia - remember them in your prayers.

Finally, I want to finish with a note of thankfulness for all that Lindsay Moorhead achieved through her time in this role. Her leadership and passion has been clear to those she served alongside, and we pray for God's blessing upon her and the family in this next phase of life.

Geoff,
Director, ECM Ireland

PRAY FOR SLOVENIA



Located in central Europe, Slovenia is often referred to as 'the green heart of Europe'. Mighty peaks, picturesque landscapes, sweeping vineyards and lovely coastlines are just some of the attractions enveloped by the small country.

Please stand in prayer with our Slovenian workers, that many will come to know, love and follow our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps, one day soon, by the grace of God, Slovenia may have different statistics, with Evangelical Christians living for His glory in every sphere of influence.

Prayer points



For the newly elected president of Slovenia, Nataša Pirc Musar'. Pray for the major and minor leaders including the Prime Minister, deputies and mayors. Pray for the Lord's help for them to work together for the well-being of all Slovenians, and work to the best of their ability for the reconciliation of the Slovenian nation.



Pray for the church in Slovenia to partner together in the Gospel and work on opportunities that enhance the work of the Gospel going further. Pray for unity, wisdom and sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and continual renewal in the lives of individuals and Christian communities.



Pray for those struggling with pressures of life, illnesses, depression, loss of their loved ones and other challenges to know the Lord's presence, grace and help. Pray for the wellbeing of believers, for their physical, emotional and spiritual health and opportunities to share the living hope with their neighbours.

ECM MINISTRY

ECM Ireland have a number of national workers serving in Slovenia. Pray for them as they work for God in various places and different contexts, as they plant churches in a secular culture, full of atheism, materialism, occultism and other ideologies. A strong Bible believing testimony is needed in Slovenia.



Bostjan and Lidija Cifer (student ministry and church planting in Maribor)

Sebastian and Glorija Forjan (church planters in Radovljica)



Alen and Lila Kercmar (serving within a Lutheran church in Murska Sobota)

Goran Macura (church planter in Domzale)



POPULATION

2,082,000



15% under 15 years-old



Births per day: 52



55% urban dwellers



Deaths per day: 55



Capital: Ljubljana



Life expectancy: 82



Peoples: 88% Slovene; 4% Serb; 2% Bosniac (Muslimani); 2% Croat; 1% Austrian; plus 13

UNREACHED PEOPLE

90,000 (4.3%)

(14th place in the whole world of least evangelicals)



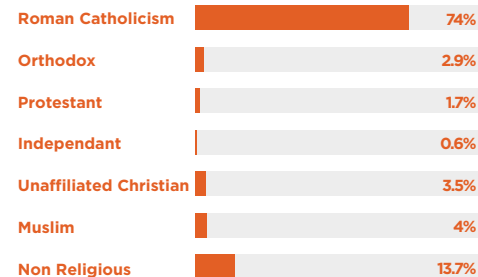
40-45 evangelical churches in the whole country. One church per 50,000 people.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Slovenia has had a Protestant witness since the Reformation, but still has very few evangelical churches and needs church-planting teams. Most congregations lack a full-time pastor and need outside financial assistance. A long history of Catholic tradition is under threat. The three main Christian groups (Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran) are lacking in spiritual vitality. They are rapidly declining into irrelevance while agnosticism, New Age and different forms of Eastern religious beliefs are increasing, as is general spiritual apathy, even among those who notionally believe in God. Pray for an awakening in the mainline churches that draws the many nominal Christians into personal faith in Christ.

Comparison: In Northern Ireland, you need to invite 4-5 people to meet one believer, in Slovenia you need 1000 people.

BELIEFS



EQUIPPING A NEW GENERATION



BY BOSTJAN CIFER

The Slovenian Evangelical Church is very small and young, but we can see that God is doing something special among young people. Many are ready to take on a leadership role and serve the body of Christ. Given that we do not have a Bible school and no regular Christian conferences where young people can be trained and equipped for the ministry, we are grateful for the opportunities offered by IFES Europe.



to very useful seminars and debates in small groups gave me motivation and ideas on how to preach the gospel in my hometown. Sharing experiences and ways from other European countries opened my thoughts, insights and the importance of making people around me aware of the Good News"

At the end of October, three students and I visited the IFES FEUER (Fellowship of Evangelists in the Universities of Europe) conference in Greece. The purpose of this conference is to train and equip evangelists to proclaim the truth, beauty and wonder of the Gospel to today's generation of students. This was the first Christian conference for all three students, and they were extremely enthusiastic about the content and getting to know other students and movements.

Laura said:

"I took a lot away from this conference - much more than I could have imagined. Listening

When we returned home, Marko prepared a student apologetics course. We had two new students in our group and they both heard the Gospel for the first time. Another student Anže, who also attended the conference, led one of his friends to Christ after the conference.

Conferences like this can have a powerful influence on students. Our commitment is to train and equip young people for the work of the ministry, and we have started to develop an apprenticeship program to equip a new generation of Christians for the lifelong service to Christ and His Church in Slovenia.



Working in Slovenia

Sebastian Forjan alongside his wife Glorija are church planters in Radovljica, Slovenia.

? What is the vision for ministry that the Lord has given you?

To share the glorious Gospel in northwest Slovenia, to make disciples of Jesus and to plant new churches in a region of 200,000 people where there are only 4 evangelical churches. Over the last 3 years, the Lord has been encouraging us to care for believers and church leaders who are struggling with trauma and mental health issues, such as depression or burnout. I know personally how important it was when my mentor walked with me during hard seasons and shared Gospel truths. My desire is for other pastors/church leaders to walk with others during trials and storms, and to be refreshed in their faith, so that they will lead and serve well with full of joy.

? What new initiatives are coming up as you faithfully serve your community and the Lord?

In Slovenia, there are around 45 evangelical churches to serve a country of two million citizens. We are the fourteenth least evangelised country in the world. There is a big need and opportunity for new churches, so I am working together with other leaders to establish a national church planting network. The main goal of this network is to connect, encourage and share resources for new church plants in Slovenia.

? Why ECM?

There are many reasons why Gloria and I decided to partner with ECM but to put it in one sentence it would be, they loved us, cared for us and provided resources that we needed in our calling.

? What have been your biggest encouragements?

We are encouraged to see a new church plant in a city where the last Protestant movement was destroyed after the counter-reformation at the beginning of the 17th century. God is at work in our region and brings people to Himself in many ways, and even sometimes via the internet. I have witnessed God's goodness and faithfulness after seeing Gloria healed after burnout.

? How can we pray for you this springtime?

Pray for us to boldly proclaim the Gospel to neighbours and our local community. Pray for the preparation and planning for the church planting network that we want to see in autumn. Pray for energy and for more workers because there are many opportunities, but the workers are few. Thank you for standing with us.

TRAUMA HEALING SMALL GROUPS IN SLOVENIA



BY GLORIA FORJAN



In Slovenia, many have experienced war, domestic abuse, car accidents, mental health issues or crime. Some experiences in life are so painful that they cause deep and lasting suffering. That suffering is “trauma”; a deep wound of the heart and mind that takes a long time to heal. It damages our relationships, bodies, thoughts, and our faith.

In 2014, I experienced burnout, and depression followed. I began my healing journey with God and His Word. At the time, there was little help the church could offer and I was committed to finding answers using the internet for information. After recovery, I was invited to join a program created by a Bible society called Trauma Healing. Their material helps church leaders know how to assist their people after difficult events. I initially attended out of duty as a church leader, but little did I know God had plans to use me to care for the traumatised. I started as a facilitator and have loved every minute! It has given me an opportunity to discover gifts from God, and I began facilitating small groups, as well as training other facilitators.

Our unique method of trauma healing unites mental health practices and engagement with God through the Bible. Many Bible passages reference suffering and they tell us who God is, how He cares, and this can help us heal from the wounds of our hearts.



Ladies who attend have an opportunity to tell their story of pain and grief and bring their laments to God. They experience Christ’s love by taking their pain to the cross. They experience healing, restoration, and reconciliation with God, self, and neighbour. They then help the church become a place of healing for others.

I have used this tool as an evangelistic opportunity. I’ve had non-believers join the groups and they have enjoyed learning about God as we journeyed through lessons. I’ve received many encouraging messages about how it has been a blessing for many to be in the group. God has been so good and faithful, and I am glad to be used by Him to train churches how to be of help to those around them, who are hurting. He helps us in all our troubles, so that we can help others who have all kinds of troubles, using the same help that we ourselves have received from God (2 Cor 1:4).



CATECHISM: A RESOURCE TO EQUIP



BY ANDREW GREEN,
ECM IRELAND COUNCIL MEMBER

Originally written in the mid-1600's, the Westminster Shorter Catechism has been used in Reformed and Presbyterian churches, is both well-loved and well-worn, and one of the principle means of teaching the faith and equipping the saints. It has stood the test of time - a testimony to the work of the Assembly of Divines. There are many children and young people still learning great truths and older folk who remember what they were taught in their day by a previous generation. It is a resource with a long 'shelf-life'.



The project (alongside ECM Ireland member Saszko Nezamutdinov and ECM Supporter Rev Ben Preston) to publish the Illustrated Westminster Shorter Catechism was driven by a desire to provide a 21st Century resource to continue the use of catechism as a learning tool and form of discipleship. We wanted to see catechism in the hands of families, children, young people, and church leaders. Too often there can be an image of catechism as outdated, and the aim was to undertake the project in a contemporary and visually attractive way which would encourage those who were already practicing catechetical learning; and, to introduce it to a new audience.

Why do we believe this edition of the catechism is important? It provides an accessible edition with updated language and sentence structure that removes some of the perceived barriers of catechetical learning. The original intention in the 1600's was for families to learn the catechism and be instructed in the faith. This illustrated edition will do so in a meaningful way that is easier to 'enter'.

Knowing what we believe and why we believe it is vital, for mature Christians or new converts. Catechism is a great instrument, long used by the church - a means of equipping disciples in whatever their context. It can be a devotional aid; an aid to prayer; a teaching aid for yourself or the family; form the basis of a new member's class; form family devotions; used within worship; and on and on...

We are convinced by the truth catechism teaches and our hope is that people experience that. The Catechism states the Christian faith so concisely and it is worthy of the reading and study of all Christians. You may not be able to memorise it; but you can engage with it, discuss it, be amazed and humbled by it. You can pass it on, even to another generation. This is something that it equips all of us to do.

Why not visit the Evangelical Bookshop in person (Belfast) or online and get your own copy:
www.evangelicalbookshop.co.uk

BE EQUIPPED BY RESOURCES



By Rev Scott Moore

I used to work in a church that had a large board, outside, displaying punchy statements like, “What’s missing from our church? U R”. People stopped as they passed the thought-provoking and pithy statements. In recent years lots of churches have developed mission statements and one I’ve seen is, “Gather, Grow, Go.” I want to use this as we think about how to pick biblically rich resources to help us and others grow in faith.

Gather

ECM works in many countries across Europe. In some of these countries efforts are being made to translate rich, robust devotional and theological works. English speakers have so many resources at our fingertips, so gather from the treasure-trove of books, podcasts and resources that are a click away. Gather good resources around you that you can use time and time again. Most really good resources don’t have a use by date!

The Jesus Storybook Bible is true to the bible narrative, retelling stories in accessible language that leads us to the centre of the bible story - the person of Jesus - on every occasion. There are accompanying DVDs, curriculum and online resources.

Engage 365: a one-year Bible reading plan with notes, covering the overarching storyline of the Bible. Ideal for older teenagers. A fun, engaging way for young people to dig deep into some key books of the Bible and learn how to handle, question, and explore God’s word.

Grow

Use resources as part of your own regular devotional pattern, especially if it mirrors the bible study or sermon series at church. The Psalmist reminds us, “the entrance of God’s Word brings light.” Perhaps you’re looking for something that is lighter than a theological commentary, or something that allows you to chew over the themes explored in the sermon? **God’s Word For You** series is my recommendation. It covers most books of the bible and has an accompanying study guide. Speaking of John Bunyan, Spurgeon says, “Prick him anywhere—his blood is Biline, the very essence of the Bible flows from him. He cannot speak without quoting a text, for his very soul is full of the Word of God.” We’re aiming for this: grow heart and mind and grow your resources.

Go

Don’t just read alone, do it with others. Have an allotted time in the day when you have family worship; around the breakfast/dinner table or before bed. When you have visitors, continue with your practice- let others see that you take God’s Word seriously.

Perhaps you’re involved in ministry, or you’d like to wrestle more with some of the

themes you’ve read? Why not grab someone else who you can read with? Work through a chapter and meet to discuss what you’ve read, or set yourself a target of reading a book a month. Try the new **Love your Church** series, that explores themes such as belonging, gathering, and serving.

Everything I have mentioned can be easily obtained from your local Christian bookshop or The Good Book Company (www.thegoodbook.co.uk) So, Gather, Grow and Go with the resources God has blessed His church with.

FIVE BOOKS TO READ AND BE GLAD



BY COLIN HOLMES

I am a firm believer in reading widely, and I have the conviction that in whatever you read, there is value to be found. Below are 5 types of books that I have really enjoyed. Why not check them out for yourself and see what you learn!

1. Gentle and Lowly, by Dane Ortlund.

Read something that warms your heart and wins your affections to the Lord.

2. Dream Small, by Seth Lewis. Read something refreshingly gospel shaped and helpful. It’s beautifully written in its sharp shortness.

3. The Air We Breathe, by Glen Scrivener.

Read something that gives you confidence and clarity to navigate the challenging cultural changes around us and see how the gospel is still good news.



4. Pilgrim’s Progress, by John Bunyan.

Read something from the past, which is a different world and culture to our own. This picture of the journey of our pilgrimage with God has helped many disciples down the years.

5. The Beekeeper of Aleppo, by Christy Lefteri.

Read a novel that is hopeful and human. This story is a real help in beginning to understand the journeys made by many seeking safety today.

Space doesn’t allow me to suggest a book you don’t agree with, a book of poems / prayers / hymns, or even a good biography...

Whatever book you might choose to dive into, read wisely and well and let your heart be glad!

CASA CAMINO ANTIGUO GUESTHOUSE PROJECT

ECM team in the Basque Country, Spain by Carolyn Webb

The Camino de Santiago is one of the oldest pilgrimages in Europe which stretches across Spain, ending in the city of Santiago de Compostela. In 2022, a record-breaking 400,000 people walked the Camino. Though many people walk to enjoy the beautiful landscape or to get away from the rat-race, many people walk for deeply personal reasons; grieving, facing life changes, finding their purpose, and searching for God. Around 45% of pilgrims say they walk the Camino for religious/spiritual reasons.



James and Carolyn Webb and Mauricio and Karina Aldana are ECM missionaries in the Basque region of Las Encartaciones which is located on the Camino Olvidado (Forgotten Way).



Five years ago, God envisioned them to open a guesthouse for pilgrims passing through their town; to create a place for rest, food and sleep before continuing on their way. Their aim is to show the love of Jesus through hospitality and point pilgrims, who are often open to hearing the gospel, to find rest in Jesus.

They have launched the Casa Camino Antiguo (Ancient Way House) project to raise money to purchase and renovate a property for the pilgrim guesthouse. It would be open to local community groups, church and youth groups seeking a retreat space and would be a meeting place for their local church.

Currently, they are appealing for financial support as they hope to raise a total of €400,000. For further information or to pledge a donation, visit www.casacaminoantiguo.com

Equipping Christians for mission

Casa Camino Antiguo would provide a unique opportunity for Christians to participate in front-line mission to people who walk the Camino. Volunteers can serve pilgrims by cooking, doing maintenance, talking and praying with pilgrims or opening the Bible to share from God's Word.

The Guesthouse would be a visible presence of the church in Las Encartaciones and allow the ECM team to offer practical hospitality to pilgrims, community activities for locals, and show the love of Jesus in action.

Their prayer is that this will continue to build God's kingdom in the Basque Country and strengthen the local church. We would love you to be involved in making this vision come to life.

LEAVING A LEGACY



If you are willing to leave a gift to ECM in your will, there are three main ways to do so:

1. Residuary gift:

a share (or all) of what remains of the value of your estate once your family and friends have been dealt with. This has the advantage of staying the same over time and therefore your will won't need to change to keep up with inflation.

2. Pecuniary gift:

a specific amount of money.

3. Specific gift:

a named item such as a piece of art or jewellery.

If you want to leave a gift to ECM, or want to know more about doing so, please tick the appropriate box on the response form.

Thank you for investing in ongoing ministry in Europe!

GIVING TO ECM IRELAND

Name: _____
Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Please send me:

- ☐ ECM Life (three times per year) ☐ post ☐ email
☐ ECM's monthly prayer diary ☐ post ☐ email
☐ Eurolink (ECM Ireland monthly prayer resource) ☐ post ☐ email

Signature: _____

SINGLE GIFT DONATION

☐ £5 ☐ £15 ☐ £30 ☐ £50 Other £ _____

☐ Euros Amount € _____

- ☐ For use where most needed
☐ For the Christmas Appeal
☐ Towards the work of: _____

- ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to ECM Ireland
☐ I do not require an acknowledgment.

You can also donate on line
www.ecmireland.org/give

GIFT AID DECLARATION

☐ I wish to gift aid to ECM this and any gift I have given in the last four years, until further notice. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.

Full name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

giftaid it

REGULAR GIVING

- ☐ For use where most needed:
☐ Towards the work of:

STANDING ORDER DETAILS

Bank name:

Bank address:

..... **Postcode:**

Account holder:

Account no:

Sort code: - -

Please deduct (amount in words) pounds

from my account on / / **and then each**

☐ **Month** ☐ **Quarter** ☐ **Year (tick one)** until further notice.

This standing order (tick as appropriate)...

- ☐ Replaces
☐ Does not replace an existing standing order to ECM

Pay this sum to: European Christian Mission Ireland

A/C: 40615008 Sort Code: 98 09 60

Ballymacoss Avenue, Lisburn BT28 2GX

Signature: **Date:**

For bank use only: Paying bank please ensure all backdated payments are made and the following reference number is quoted with all payments.

Reference No.

LEGACY GIVING

- ☐ I have included ECM in my will.
☐ I would like to consider including ECM in my will.

GIFT AID DECLARATION

☐ I wish to gift aid to ECM this and any gift I have given in the last four years, until further notice. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.

Full name:

Signature: **Date:**



PRAYER

Thank God for:

- Geoff Donaldson, our ECM Ireland Director, as he continues to get to know ECM Ireland and all our members.
- The ECM Biennial: thankful for fellowship with our international family.
- Our Slovenia team and how they are pointing others to Jesus. Pray that God would transform lives across the country.

Pray for:

- Our Council, as they meet for an awayday in the Spring and as they continue to help guide and advise.
- Those who are discerning God's direction about serving with ECM Ireland.
- Our workers as they continue to serve in often difficult situations, and that they find strength and refreshment in their work.



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