

SUMMER 2025

# ECM LIFE

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION IRELAND  
NEWSLETTER

## SHOWING LOVE



# 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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# BELONGING BEFORE BELIEVING

BY GEOFF DONALDSON



'Belonging before believing' is the summary of some reflections carried out exploring what factors influence how people come to faith. Testimonies revealed that a key pathway to a faith commitment to Christ started with people encountering the love of God's people, and with it a sense of belonging. While of course people come to faith in varied ways the showing love to people is clearly an important element whether as a catalyst to faith or as something accompanying their engagement with the Gospel truths.

That showing God's love is important ought not to surprise us as Jesus often initiated encounters with people through a demonstration of love. He revealed God's love through words spoken but also through compassionate actions,

In this edition of ECM Life, you will see how our aims of Discipleship and Church Planting include practical expressions of God's love. Recently we have been hearing

tributes to Charlie Anderson (including the one by Tom Greer), who recently moved on from ECM. One couple expressed how important it was in establishing their ministry to have Charlie walk with them prayerfully and practically. This demonstrates the sort of ethos of working that flows from showing God's love both within our ECM Ireland missionary family and then through them to the people they seek to reach with the Gospel.



# BIENNIAL REFLECTIONS



**Stephen Megrath**  
*Belfast, Northern Ireland*

In Revelation 3:7 Jesus said “I set before you an open door, that no man can shut”.

Jesus is speaking to people who are saved, in the Kingdom, full of The Holy Spirit – and yet He presents us with a choice, not just to come into the church, but to leave. What a great example of showing love this is, and I am glad to say that the ECM Biennial 2025 was full of people who have fully accepted the invitation to come in and who work tirelessly to encourage others to do the same.

Working in the ECM Ireland office does afford opportunities to meet with our missionaries on occasion and to join in with prayer meetings with the larger ECM family occasionally however the Biennial gathering every two years is something extraordinary. It is wonderful to witness such an outpouring of love for each other and for God – from the

worship team, teaching, seminars and general gatherings the desire to show the love of God for all was evident.

Jesus never demanded that anyone should love Him, serving God is a choice and the choice made by our ECM leadership, missionaries and staff is to love Jesus, love what He did for us, show this love to each other and share it with everyone we can. This is my abiding memory of the biennial in 2025 and meaningful. I also deeply enjoyed the seminar *Spiritual Growth for the Long- Term*, led by Sarah Hay and Julia Mercer-Wilson. Their honest, thoughtful teaching gave me tools and perspective to continue growing in my relationship with God over time—not just in emotional highs, but in daily faithfulness.

Overall, the Biennial filled me with gratitude and gave me fresh perspective on God’s mission around the world.



**Lidija Cifer**  
*Maribor, Slovenia*

My experience at the Biennial was truly uplifting and inspiring. I especially loved the main sessions—each one was rich with teaching that challenged and encouraged me. One of the most powerful parts was hearing stories from people around the world. It was amazing to see how God is at work in so many different places and cultures. Even though the stories were diverse, they all reflected the same hope, love and faith in Jesus.

Spending time with missionaries from our own country was also a huge highlight. Hearing about their work and the communities they serve helped me better understand what it means to live out God’s love in practical ways. It was also a reminder that we are all called to support each other and walk in love, no matter where we are.

The connections we made felt deep and meaningful. I also deeply enjoyed the seminar *Spiritual Growth for the Long- Term*, led by Sarah Hay and Julia Mercer-Wilson. Their honest, thoughtful teaching gave me tools and perspective to continue growing in my relationship with God over time—not just in emotional highs, but in daily faithfulness.

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**David Gilkinson**  
*Spain*

As an Associate Pastor and Director of a para-church ministry the day to day of ministry involved a lot of pouring out, leadership, directing, dealing with conflict and equipping others. Our families are along for the ride whether they’re in the mood or not. It can often be demanding and put a strain on our own spiritual lives and family relationships. **Going to the biennial is an opportunity to stop.** To enjoy the ministry of others, to be taught from the Bible without having to look around the room and think about what conversations we need to have after church, to have a dedicated team pour into our kids and their walk with God, to enjoy sitting around good food and chat with others who understand the experience and challenges of serving cross-culturally.

This was our second biennial and it has been a real blessing to be there and enjoy the atmosphere, the kids ministry and **simply enjoy being with God and with others.** The biennial really was a blessing for us as a family to pause and enjoy a moment away from the constant realities of cross-cultural ministry.



# SHOWING LOVE WHERE WE LIVE



By Gerrit van Dijk,  
Germany



In northeast Germany, we regularly meet people who have never seen a Bible or even met a Christian. Christianity isn't rejected here – it's simply unknown. This is what we call a post-atheist context: generations growing up without any exposure to faith, church or Scripture.



Religion has disappeared from everyday life, and people have simply stopped asking the big questions. Especially among the poorer population, this has created a deep sense of disconnection – not just from the church, but from hope itself. Many people struggle with literacy, isolation and long-term unemployment. In this context, traditional forms of evangelism don't work. Flyers, events, even preaching often miss the mark – they feel disconnected from daily life.

That's why we take a different approach. We live in the neighbourhoods we serve.

Some of our church plants meet in small buildings, others meet wherever space is available. But the real community happens in everyday life – on the street, between apartment blocks, in conversations at the bus stop or over a shared meal. Our approach is incarnational and contextual: we try to be present in people's lives, to understand their world, and to let the gospel speak in ways that make sense in their reality. And slowly, something is happening. People are beginning to discover faith – many for the very first time. In our four existing church plants, we

*Our approach is incarnational and contextual: we try to be present in people's lives, to understand their world, and to let the gospel speak in ways that make sense in their reality.*

celebrate baptisms every year. These are not people coming back to church – they are people encountering Jesus for the first time in their lives.

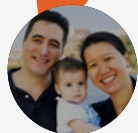
What we see is incredibly encouraging: a faith that is warm, generous and deeply practical. It's not shaped by religious tradition or theological jargon, but by real-life experience. This kind of faith – simple, honest, close to life – has something to teach us as mission workers. We are learning alongside the people we serve.

We're looking for people who want to be part of this – through prayer, through encouragement, or maybe even by coming and joining the work. And we love to share stories of what God is doing here. Even in the most secular corners of Europe, the gospel is alive. And that gives us hope.



# SHOWING LOVE ON CAMPUS

Training Bible Study Leaders in Portugal



By Samuel & Emily  
Loa-Ferreira, Portugal



What happens when students learn to lead others in God's Word? In Coimbra, Portugal, 15 young leaders are now better equipped to serve on their campus—and in the church for years to come.

The University Bible Group (GBU) with which we work in Portugal, catches people in a very formative stage of their lives. For those who are not followers of Jesus, it is a time where they are often **open to exploring faith** as an adult, and for those who are followers of Jesus, it is a time where they are able to be matured in their Christian faith and witness as they receive Bible teaching and training through GBU activities.

One of these key GBU activities is weekly Bible study groups in faculty groups. In Coimbra, the city in which we work, **several leaders of the GBU Bible studies expressed a lack of confidence in how to lead it, and how to read the bible with others.** In response to this, last year, we ran a Bible study leaders training course over 5 x 2 hour sessions during the semester aimed at equipping students with tools to be able to read the Bible well, and be able to lead others in it.

Some key focuses of the training included helping students understand the historical and literary context of a bible passage, how a Bible passage fits within God's big story of salvation centred around Jesus, and how to make Bible studies welcoming and inviting to non-Christians. **These were new concepts to many of the students.**

The take up of the training was more than we had anticipated, with 15 students (half of the GBU Coimbra group) taking part, most attending with eagerness to learn and apply what they had been learning.

These are now **15 students who are now better equipped** to handle God's word and love those they lead, not only in the context of GBU Bible studies, but more significantly, in their respective churches across Portugal and beyond, now and for their lifetime.

# CHARLIE - WE'LL MISS YOU!



By Tom Greer



"Charlie, you always had the Kingdom of God first. You were a great boss, and I felt safe in stepping out of my comfort zone because I knew you had my back..."

"Charlie, we thank God for your faithful service and the countless lives you've touched over the years..."

"Charlie, how wonderful it is to have had you and Miriam alongside us from the beginning. Really appreciate how you encourage and care for our whole family..."

**These were just a few of the many tributes shared by ECM Ireland members on 30th May when it was confirmed that Charlie Anderson was finishing his work with ECM and taking up a new role with Fermanagh & Omagh District Council. Miriam had left her member care role with ECM just a couple of months earlier and together they are a great loss to the work of the Mission.**

After several years serving with Baptist Missions in Peru, Charlie was appointed as the Director of ECM Ireland back in 2007 and, from the outset, he approached the task with an openness to explore new opportunities to grow the Mission's work. In particular, he saw the potential for bringing new first culture national workers into the ECM team, and it was he who, along with Stuart Rowell, pioneered the first Gospel Workers Gathering in Slovenia back in 2014.

In 2018 Charlie moved to a new post with ECM International as their Field Director, spending a lot of time travelling as he sought to develop the larger work of the Mission. Sadly, the huge demands of that work took a toll on his health leading to an extended time of leave. However, it was great to have Charlie back to the fore in planning this year's Gospel Workers Gathering in Bosnia, where once again his good humour and friendship proved a blessing to so many, me included.

Charlie brought to ECM wonderful gifts as a strategic thinker with big vision for Gospel partnerships and new openings in mission. As he steps back, for a time, into his previous career in environmental health, we know that a passion for mission still burns deep in his heart, and we pray that he and Miriam will continue to know the Lord's leading and blessing as they discern His good plan for them in these coming days.

# GOSPEL WORKER'S GATHERING

Building Gospel Partnerships in the Balkans



By Geoff Donaldson

Gathering in Tuzla, Bosnia, with Gospel workers from Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and Bosnia is a testimony of the work of the Gospel in crossing boundaries. May 2025 saw the latest edition of the annual Gospel Workers' Gathering and it proved to be memorable.

## Our purpose

The running of the GWG stemmed from the vision of Stuart Rowell and Charlie Anderson and was recently summed up as ***Building Gospel Partnerships in the Balkans***. How we do it has been coined in this way, ***'The Gospel Workers Gathering is an annual event where we come together to build Gospel Partnerships through fellowship and prayer.'***

## Our location

There was great joy expressed by the workers in Bosnia that we were gathering in their spiritually barren country. With perhaps only 500 believers in that country there are real challenges facing ECM Ireland workers Radovan and Blazanka Trajkovski and our other contacts in Tuzla. For some of the workers gathered this was their first visit to Bosnia or interaction with fellow workers from Bosnia.

## Our programme

The time spent together involved worship, Bible reflection, prayer and ministry updates from workers in the Balkans. Geoff McIlraith's teaching on the missional Church at Antioch inspired us all. For those of travelling from ECM Ireland the updates are a highlight, as it both challenges and envisions us to see how we can best support our brothers and sisters. There are times for chats, walks and eating – the Balkan hospitality entails food aplenty!

*We are so grateful to God for the way he has increasingly used this unique gathering to build partnerships and support for the Gospel work in the Balkans.*

## Our relationships

ECM Ireland has historically provided a lead to the GWG and through these gatherings we have developed relationships among our ECM workers in the Balkans and also with other Gospel workers, often serving in isolated situations. We are seeking to develop relationships between local church leaders in Ireland with the workers from the Balkans and are doing this through partnerships we have established with some like-minded Churches and organisations.'

## Our thankfulness

We are so grateful to God for the way he has increasingly used this unique gathering



to build partnerships and support for the Gospel work in the Balkans. We are grateful for those people who funded and prayed for the gathering and in so doing gave us confidence to begin planning for GWG 2026.

## SOME REFLECTIONS

*"I was deeply encouraged by the time spent with fellow Christian workers from across the Balkans and beyond, united by the Gospel and a shared desire to build deep, trusting relationships and long-term gospel partnerships that will bear lasting fruit for Christ in our region."*

**Bostjan Cifer, ECM Missionary in Slovenia**

*"GWG 2025 in Bosnia deeply impacted me as I met Gospel coworkers serving in hard places— hearing their stories opened my eyes to their challenges and inspired me to mobilize prayer and support from our church in Slovenia."*

**Sebastian Forjan, ECM Missionary in Slovenia**

*'I was glad to participate in GWG. It was an encouraging and uplifting experience, with a good atmosphere and dear people'*

**Bane Plasvic, Pastor in Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia**

And finally, the receptionist in Tuzla told Stuart Rowell that they had never had a group like ours before! He was able to explain that we were Christians from eight countries who took seriously our responsibilities of being ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor.14-15). A great way to end the time in Tuzla.



# SHOWING LOVE TO ALL PEOPLE



By Rosaliene Donaldson

## Ephesians 3:17

*"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."*

## Together with all the lord's holy people

Often our churches miss a significant number of people. Why? Often barriers exist that prevent disabled people coming to be part of the Lord's people.

Sometimes I have heard people say:

**'We don't have anyone with a disability in our church.'**

Do we not need to ask ourselves, **'How can we make sure to welcome and invite**

**those with disabilities and overcome any barriers, as Jesus described in Luke 14?'**

Have a look at the graphic below. Where do you think you are? Where do you think the people in your church are? What can we do to make sure that altogether we will grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and show this love to others.

**What stage are we at?**

## CHANGING ATTITUDES: FOUR KEY STEPS

### 4. Friendship & co-labourers

We need to **engage** and consider how we **together** can respond to god's call on our lives. We can all show love and receive love.

### 3. Care

We need to enable **integration** and recognise a mutual need for friendship and support of one another.

### 2. Pity

We need to **provide access** through hearing and seeing what practical can be given to enable someone to come to church.

### 1. Ignorance

We need to **raise awareness** on how God loves everyone including those with disabilities.

# WHAT IS IN YOUR HANDS?



By Stuart Rowell



In 2005 at our Eastern Europe Prayer Days in Hungary a young Dutch girl came to the front with her mother to thanked me for playing Lego with her when she was six years old! When Communism collapsed in 1990 the opportunities were immense and Estera's parents responded to the call of God to move to Romania where they later had three children. I have always believed that part of leadership is about recognising the importance of children, particular MKs (missionary's kids) in God's economy.

When Ellsye and I sensed that same call from God to leave our settled lives in Northern Ireland and move to Austria we were very aware of the price our three children paid. Without a choice they were leaving their friends and all that was secure for them. This has helped me to relate to MKs, to play games, read books, chat and mess about over the last thirty-five years. I was not really aware of the gifts that God had given me just like Moses but I love what God asks Moses at the Burning Bush. In Exodus 4:2 he says "What is in your hand?" and Moses replies, "a staff". Just an ordinary wooden pole that every a Middle Eastern shepherd had. Later when Moses goes back to Egypt with his wife to confront Pharaoh and now he "took the staff of God in his hand." Do you get what I am saying that God delights in taking the ordinary and making it useful in his Kingdom.

In 1990 when ECM invited me to be the Eastern Europe Director I had been a

pastor in a small church for just two years, led a building project in Castlewellan Castle, ran our small business but never a team of missionaries stretching across Central and Eastern Europe. No one in their right mind had ever said that I was a good administrator and like some of my colleagues did. However, I hope that playing with children like Estera, bringing them treats, going for bike rides, taking them to McDonalds and for meals in restaurants with their parents has shown love. Leadership is lonely and the care for MKs is a vital part of the pastoral care of Gospel workers. For thirty-five years I have had the privilege of taking my staff and travelling many thousands of miles to spend hundreds of hours at kitchen tables showing a part God's love for God's servants in hard places. Now I bring tea bags, coffee, home- improvement magazines and books for pastors! Incidentally Estera is qualified radiologist in Holland and godly young woman.

## 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](http://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**

**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 POINTS

**1.** Many of our missionaries are busy facilitating Summer Camps - pray that they also have time for rest and refreshment.

### **2. 13th-16th August:**

ECM Ireland (Colin and Ally Holmes and Geoff Donaldson) will be taking part in the Mission part of 'Kinfire' event.

### **3. 18th-22nd August:**

ECM Ireland are involved in the Global Village at the Bangor Worldwide Mission event and on Friday 22nd are hosting a seminar slot when we will 'fly' people to Athens to see the mission opportunities ECM are involved in.



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