



Newsletter of European Christian Mission Ireland

Spring, 2019

# EUROPE

a place where confidence in a future of material prosperity is shaken...



## Stats and Stories.

Find out how God is using His people to change statistics in Europe

# European Christian Mission Ireland is an interdenominational, evangelical, missionary organisation working in Europe.

## OUR MISSION:

ECM Ireland's aim is to glorify God through the planting and development of churches that will evangelise and disciple the peoples of Europe.

Europe has become a complex multicultural and multi-religious continent full of challenges, but God continues to work, and His light still shines in Europe, where He continues to move forward and build His church.

## WE BELIEVE:

that Europe needs to hear and see the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God has chosen the church as His instrument to reach the whole world with His gospel of salvation. Church planting therefore, is ECM's chosen strategy to transform Europe. Through knowing Jesus' love; people change, local communities change, then surrounding communities, regions, and through regions, countries are transformed, and through countries the whole of Europe.

## WE PRAY:

Your Kingdom come... in Europe,  
Your will be done... in Europe.  
**Amen.**

## WAYS TO STAY IN TOUCH

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# The Director's Letter:

**From Miriam Anderson, Acting Director**

Do you like statistics? I do, when they are clear and have graphs or pie charts as well. As you read through our 'Stats and Stories' in this edition you may feel saddened, by the dark, barren spiritual lives of many Europeans. Some seek satisfaction in materialism and new age ideas, while others have turned to alcohol, drugs, and free living, to fill the void in their lives. It could be disheartening were it not for the hope of the gospel which shines as a beacon, bringing light, kindness and the love of Jesus, into the darkness.

As you read these STATS and STORIES I hope you are moved to praise God and keep on praying, as He uses His people; our missionaries and partners, as well as churches and other groups to bring practical, social, and spiritual help into lives. Read about a lady fleeing Syria, the youth of Ferrybank or the young and older marrieds of Slovenia, who are experiencing the love of Christ. Jesus brings hope, joy, and new life through His word and His people. Enjoy!

**We are looking for people who  
can teach English to children  
and young people in Bosnia,  
this Summer.**

**Can you help?**

*See the back page  
for more details.*







# **SLOVENIA: A country with one of the highest Suicide rates in the world.** .....

**by Sebastian Forjan**  
.....

## **THE STATS:**

**More than 300 deaths occur due to suicide each year. Approximately 25 times as many Slovenians attempt it. In 2017 there were 412 suicides, of which 328 were men and 84 women which puts Slovenia among the top 10 countries with the highest rate of suicide in the world.**

## **THE STORY:**

What's hidden behind such statistics? Stories of individuals, who fall into depression, face difficult family situations, experience financial problems or can't find purpose in their lives. This problem is so big that almost every Slovene knows someone or has connections with someone, who has committed suicide.

Sadly, in our own ministry in 2017 we experienced this too.

One of our church youth shared their struggles and told me that they were going to end their life. It was serious and I immediately asked our prayer partners to pray for this young person. I also kept in touch with the parents as a former police friend had advised me to do.

Praise God for answered prayers; the young person did not take their life that summer, and although they still struggle with depression, they have chosen to work with a counsellor rather than end it all. I meet with them regularly to help them study the Bible and apply God's truth to their life.

Slovenia (like most western countries) is faced with conditions in which the social role of the family in the classic sense, is losing its primary importance.





Sebastian and Gloria

Numbers of marriages are declining, while the number of consensual unions and the number of children born outside marriage, are growing. On the other hand, the ratio between the number of divorces and marriages is rising. In Slovenia just over 1 couple on average, per 1 000 population, ends in divorce.

We have been privileged to be a part of a 'Love and Respect' Ministry where we counsel couples and guide groups through a seven-lesson 'Plan for Marriage.' It was a great joy for us to see how the couples enjoyed and learned from it. One couple have been married for over 40 years. She became a believer at 27 and remained with her non-believing husband trusting that God would save him as well. It was difficult as he was an alcoholic, and a hard man to deal with, but last year Sebastian had the privilege of

baptising this man who gave his life to Jesus at age 67.

They have asked us to counsel them and help them make things right. It is not easy, but we believe it is possible for this marriage to be restored, because God is in it. It is a great joy for us to have them in our home, teach them from God's Word, pray with them and encourage them in their relationship. God can rebuild what we can't, and He can do it throughout Slovenia.

#### **URGENT PRAYER REQUEST:**

*Visa laws in Ireland have changed making it difficult for other nationalities to be missionaries there.*

*Pray that God will burden Christians throughout Ireland to consider moving to be part of the small church plant teams like ours in Claremorris and Waterford.*



# Good News for Europe.

by Jim Memory, ECM missionary based in Spain and also a lecturer in European Mission at Redcliffe College. (1)

.....

There was a time when Europe was considered the Christian Continent, yet through the 19th and 20th centuries, Europeans increasingly looked to science and progress, economics and secular politics, for the answers to their problems. In effect they put their faith and hope in 'another gospel'. **Today however, that confidence is being shaken by the economic, environmental, political, social and spiritual realities of 21st-century Europe.**

This article reviews the crucial issues that Europe faces today from a gospel perspective, in full conviction, that the gospel of Jesus Christ continues to be the one genuine hope, for Europe.

## Economic Crisis

The global financial crash in 2008 had a devastating impact on many European countries, leading to economic recession, severe public sector cutbacks and rising unemployment. Most European economies

remain in the doldrums, and unemployment in Greece and Spain is stubbornly high at 24% and 20% respectively. For those under the age of 25 the situation is even more agonising. Nearly half of all Greek and Spanish young people are without a job.

The uncertainty surrounding the economic implications of Brexit only exacerbate the depressing outlook. Europe almost certainly faces a long period of economic stagnation. **Yet across Europe churches are responding to rising levels of poverty by demonstrating the good news in action through food banks, free debt counselling and employment initiatives.**

As Europeans' confidence in a future of material prosperity is shaken, **the church has a tremendous opportunity to demonstrate that our confidence is not in the treasures of this world but in the riches of the Kingdom.**

# Good News for Europe.

## Political Instability

Europe's economic situation is complicated by political instability on three fronts: Euroscepticism, nationalism and independence movements.

Euroscepticism used to be a British peculiarity, however, it can now be found almost everywhere in Europe. Anti-austerity, anti-European Union (EU) parties have emerged in Greece, Portugal, Spain and elsewhere. Britain's decision to leave the EU introduces a new level of uncertainty. **Brexit is an existential threat to the EU itself and is likely to dominate European political discussions for years, even decades, to come.**

A further threat is the rise of nationalism. **Nationalist, populist and xenophobic movements are gaining strength in many parts of Europe.** They tap into popular discontent at soaring unemployment and point the finger at migrants as those to blame. The refugee crisis of 2015-16, and the terrorist attacks in Belgium and France, have only fuelled these movements. As a result, even in European heartlands, xenophobic parties like Front National (France) and Alternative für Deutschland (Germany) have significantly increased their popular support.

There are also regional independence movements. During 2014 the EU faced unprecedented attempts by two regions to form new independent states: Catalonia and Scotland. In the east, a perceived threat to the Russian-speaking minority led to Russia's annexation of Crimea and 'occupation' of southeastern Ukraine.

**The gospel is a message of peace and reconciliation with God, but also with our neighbour.** As God's new society, the church is called to demonstrate a different way of relating to one another that sees beyond our national identity to our identity in Christ: 'Here there is no Gentile or Jew...but Christ is all and is in all' (Col. 3:11).

As our political context is shaken, **we have an opportunity to take the Christian voice into the public square to speak for justice, peace and solidarity, not as political slogans but gospel realities.**

Many churches are doing this as they respond to the third crucial issue, we face in Europe today - migration.

## Part two next time...

1. For more information on Redcliffe College MA courses see: [www.redcliffe.ac.uk/courses/cross-cultural-mission-training/contemporary-missiology-ma](http://www.redcliffe.ac.uk/courses/cross-cultural-mission-training/contemporary-missiology-ma)



**If you would like to invite us to speak at your church, please contact us at:**

 **028 92 666 044**

**[ecmireland.org](http://ecmireland.org)**

 **[ecm.ni@ecmi.org](mailto:ecm.ni@ecmi.org)**

**[Facebook.com/ecmireland](https://www.facebook.com/ecmireland)**





# One Woman's Journey!

by Peter and Anna Crawford

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We walked up a poorly lit stairwell in an apartment block in down town Athens. Eight months had passed since we had been involved with Delia (not her real name) and the birth of her third son in somewhat unusual circumstances.

She had been found homeless and pregnant in the streets of Athens with two little boys, early last year, having fled her home in Iraqi Kurdistan. She had walked through the mountains of Turkey, a long hard journey, and had been violently abused along the way, the reason for her pregnancy. Her husband had earlier discarded her, leaving her with burn scars all over her body. It was not just the war she was fleeing.

Our friend, Luciana, was contacted to try and see if a safe place could be found for her, and she was able to get her housed in a 'Safe House' which she managed.

That's where we came into the picture. We had planned to visit Luciana and husband Giorgis in Athens, and it just happened to coincide with the time of the baby's birth.

So our ten day ministry trip to Greece, ended up being an up close and personal encounter with the realities of these dear folk, who continue to arrive into Europe from such troubled backgrounds. We were able to offer support to Luciana as she navigated the Greek health and social services. We visited the two little boys, who were kept in care while their mother was in maternity. It was a special moment to watch them, as they used our iPhone to see their little baby brother and talk to their Mum in a language neither of us knew.

Little Hazarang was born on the 9th of May, and it was a real joy to see him now, healthy and well with his mother,

## One Woman's Journey!

and his two brothers. They have a tiny flat, which is shared with another immigrant family, in the heart of Athens. The oldest boy is now going to Greek school, and we saw such a difference from the scared and traumatised boy we helped to care for back in May.

Delia has also been visiting the Christian fellowship where Luciana and Giorgis are involved, so she is on a spiritual journey as well as a physical one. She has been given refugee status, but life continues to be dangerous. The story of what happened, has caused her family back home great shame, and dishonour, and there are serious threats against her life. Please pray for the possibility that she may be able to move to another country.

We share this story, because, we are convinced, that the future of Missions in Europe, is tied up with the fate of refugees and economic migrants arriving in our continent in ever increasing numbers. In Athens, whole fellowships of men and women from Iran, Afghanistan and other places continue to grow. They come from a Muslim background, but they desire to follow Jesus.

One of my (Peter's) earliest experiences when I first became a Christian was travelling in Iran and Afganistan. Imagine how moving it was for me, now, to hear the gospel preached in Farsi. It's worth writing about and giving God the glory. He is great indeed.

**We post other stories online.**  
**[Facebook.com/ecmireland](https://www.facebook.com/ecmireland)**

## UP-TO-DATE WITH THE MOORHEADS

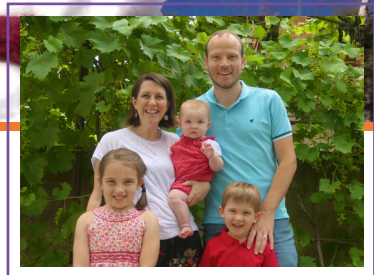
**From Lindsay, Mark, Seth and Baby Rosa**

**Praise God for the safe arrival of Rosa Honor Patrícia Moorhead, born on the 29.11.18.**

**We are overjoyed with her and Seth loves being a big brother. Over the next couple of months, we plan to move from Bangor to the Lisburn area.**



**Please pray that God would clearly guide us as we look for somewhere new to live. Thanks.**



# ‘Telling it Like it is’ One Year on in Albania.

by Josh and Ali Reeves

The past year - our first in Albania - has been the most difficult of our lives. Apart from the usual missionary experience of culture shock and learning to survive in a place where we have no language or connections, we have faced many unexpected difficulties. We’ve had more sickness in the family than ever before, with at least one of the kids (Isla, Sam and Amalia) unwell at any given time since we arrived. Having sleepless nights and sick children at home has hampered our ability to get out and about and crack on with language-learning.

Our language-learning also got off to a bad start because our first teacher was chronically unwell herself, meaning every second lesson was cancelled. We found a new teacher in July, but in August Isla’s best friend at school died unexpectedly of a bacterial infection, throwing our family into grief and upheaval for some months.

Meanwhile, our initial church connection didn’t work out as expected, meaning we’ve spent a good portion of the year

looking for a fellowship. Add in the daily struggles of high pollution levels (the thick smog in Tirana set off our smoke alarm one night), frequent power cuts (seven in one day recently) and insane traffic (Josh spends 3 hours each day just doing school runs), and you may understand why we frequently ask ourselves why God has us in Albania at all.

However, through it all we have seen God’s faithful goodness. In the grief of losing her best friend, Isla’s faith blossomed. We have learned bits of the language, even if much less than we hoped. In fact, friends have opened up to us and shared their burdens, precisely because we don’t have the language yet and so are safe “outsiders”. We’ve been able to read the Bible with non-believing friends. Small glimmers of hope, but they reassure us that God has us right where he wants us.

As you pray for us, please ask for improved health, perseverance, and JOY in all we do!



### Hola from the Gilkinsons!

(who went to Spain in Jan 19)

"We have been here for two wonderfully blessed but also challenging, weeks and have enjoyed setting up home, exploring the area, meeting more of the ECM family and attending church. Formal language learning comes next and we are nervous and excited. We have really felt God's presence with us and so appreciate the prayers of supporters, plus the practical support and friendship of ECM in NI and here in Castellón."



### URGENT PRAYER REQUEST

- Church planters needed in Athens, Greece.
- Opportunities for short-termers to help in vital ministries in the Athens area.
- Pray and contact us for more information.

### Not running the Marathon?

**Did you know that you can organise a Coffee Morning at your church or home instead?**



### SHORT-TERM OPPORTUNITIES

**Go to [ecmireland.org](http://ecmireland.org) and click on 'service opportunities' to find out more about these:**

- Church Development Workers in the Zagreb Area .
- Team Members for Pioneer Church Plant in University Area Castellón.
- Social and Digital Media Coordinator Seregno
- Monitor/Educator at Rehabilitation Centre Pozoblanco
- Church Plant Team Members in Eastern Spain
- Refugee Worker Southwest Germany
- Help with planting a church in Croatia

**Planning to run the Belfast Marathon this May Day Bank Holiday?**

**Did you know that you can choose ECM Ireland as your fundraising option?**

**Speak to us:  
[ecm.ni@ecmi.org](mailto:ecm.ni@ecmi.org)  
02892 666 044**



# Youth Finding Faith in Ireland

By Colin Holmes, Ferrybank Rep. Ireland

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**In a country that appears to be rapidly moving away from its Christian heritage, a recent survey by Barna provides a fascinating insight into the faith of the Republic of Ireland's teenagers, and young adults.**

Here are some key stats:

## **Nominal Christianity.**

Although 70% of Irish youth label themselves as Christians, 63% qualify as nominal Christians ie. they are Christians in name only, and have abandoned its key tenets.

## **Crisis of faith.**

- 25% of Irish youth are currently going through a crisis of faith.
- 40% have already done so, and
- 49% of practising Christians have seriously questioned their faith in the past.

## **Conflict between progressive and Christian values.**

81% of young people at least partially agree with the statement, "I think the Church's teachings on sexuality and homosexuality are wrong."

## **Adults' influence can make or break youth's ideas about Christianity.**

One in three say a minister, pastor or priest has made Christianity more appealing to them. For 42%, Mothers give an appealing picture of religion, 30% for Fathers. Even so, 55% of Christian youth do not know an adult who regularly talks with them about faith.

## **Open to a deeper expression of faith.**

37% of Irish youth say they'd like to find a way to follow Jesus that connects to the world they live in.

Responding to these stats Ruth Garvey Williams (editor of Irish Christian Magazine- Vox) says:

"There is a significant opportunity for older Christians who will live out their faith with integrity and authenticity... Healthy discipleship will create safe spaces for younger people to ask their questions without fear of immediate condemnation or criticism. It will also focus on teaching young people the tools to think through the tough issues, by seeking God and searching the scriptures."

### OUR STORY

Over the past 9 years, sharing the gospel with the Ferrybank children and youth in an authentic and relational way, has been a key part of the story of the church plant here. For the past 5 years 'Pulse' Youth Group has provided a safe space for questions and presented the way of Jesus in a form that connects to the world they live in, but this has come to an end, for now.

We give thanks for Ross McGaughran, from Australia, who was part of the team here for 2 years and took on leadership of 'Pulse' as well as being involved in initiating an inter church Christian youth camp last summer (UNITE Youth Collective) which continues to meet.

We continue to walk alongside some of the youth and see the possibilities for another chapter in making young disciples here, yet there are more opportunities than we are able for. We are seeking God to build a team again.



**Perhaps you might consider joining our team? See the “Children and Youth Workers in South East Ireland” opportunity on our website:**

**[ecmireland.org](http://ecmireland.org)**

**We post other stories online.**  
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# Tribute to Doug Groth

## ECM Missionary in Poland

by Stuart Rowell

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**Some people crave obscurity and others live comfortably with it making no effort to be noticed. My friend and ECM colleague Doug Groth, an unassuming man, with whom I had the privilege to serve for 28 years, died from cancer recently aged 63. My lasting impression is of an uncomplicated man who lived simply, loved God, and loved people.**

His big blue bible was his constant companion and he evangelised at every opportunity and prayed people into the Kingdom. I remember him commenting about a hope to go fishing with his brother Chris, while on Home Assignment in America, so that he could witness to him on the boat, Chris became a Christian soon after that trip.

Doug's father also told me,  
**"Doug led me to Christ when I was a hopeless alcoholic."**

Doug Groth was born in Portland, Oregon, USA in 1955 and he was saved at age 18 led to the Lord by Mark Bocks who planted the seed for evangelism in Doug's heart. A former student who studied at 'Praise Bible Institute' told me, "Doug was a quiet guy but very focused." The 'Quiet Man' in fact was also a pioneer. On a bitterly cold January 3rd at his funeral, I described him as "a man on a mission." That mission was to bring home a bride for Jesus Christ.

**Doug loved the body of Christ, the church and he loved Poland, becoming almost more Polish than the Poles!**

## Tribute to Doug Groth

Having spent 3 years travelling into Eastern Europe smuggling Bibles and christian literature, Doug knew the risks of moving to Poland in 1986 while it was still a communist country. Living in Krakow he enrolled as a foreign language student at university and while attending church met Lila, who became the love of his life and Poland became home when they married 2 years later.

Last year just before the diagnosis, he and Lila had decided to join the team in Mikolow near Katowice, where ECM colleagues Stephen and Kamila Cackowski are planting a new church. Doug's life ambition was to lead Poles to Christ, plant a church and then move on to plant another one. This new venture of faith had rekindled his enthusiasm for trusting God in a new place and he was keen to get started. Like many church planters, Doug and Lila experienced major opposition at times but in the small town of Rabka for example, they have left a legacy, which reflects the quiet determination and focus that was the hall-mark of Doug's ministry.

Writing to his friends and ECM family he announced the news of his cancer in a letter that epitomized how he lived; submission to the sovereignty of God but balanced with a wonderful love for life.

After quoting Philippians 1: 21-25 he wrote, **"We have found out that I have liver and intestinal cancer. We are trusting God and not wanting to tell Him what to do. We are trying to hear what He is saying to us."**



Doug went to be with Jesus having lived for 6 months with a diagnosis that had shocked everyone. His last words, just three hours before he died, were characteristic,  
**"I am going home."**

Like in Jesus' parable about the wealthy master who went on a journey and left his servants with money to invest on his behalf, Doug Groth invested wisely with the gifts he had been given. On December 17th at 7 pm Doug heard the Master say: **"Well done, good and faithful servant."** (Matt. 25)

Doug is survived by his wife Lila (Pictured above), Natalia (& Mihal) and Philip, whom he loved passionately, and his parents in USA .



# The Reason for God

by Sasko and Ania, Poland

"I still believe in God and sometimes go to church to pray and sit in silence. But the Church as an institute; I can't be bothered with it".

"There is no way to ever find out if God exists or not. The Big Bang theory is too difficult to believe in. A Mind or a Force that created everything is easier and makes more sense. But we can't be sure what the force is, where it is and what it looks like".

"Science disarms religion and proves that believing in God is only for primitive people".

Does this sound familiar? These are typical "doctrines" believed by young Polish adults. In order to respond to those who mock, doubt or simply are not sure about the Christian faith, Ania and I started a discussion group in October 2017 where we read through "The Reason for God," a book by Tim Keller. Although written by an American, it is very well targeted at modern-day Polish skeptics.

## THE STATS:

- 1 book
- 15 month course
- 24 meetings
- 24 meals
- 50 litres of tea
- 85 hours of reasoning and intensive thinking
- 5100 minutes of hospitality, laughter and fellowship.



# The Reason for God

## THE STORY

We invited our friends from Vox Box (our church's English club) and some volunteers from a photography ministry, 'Humans of Krakow' to the discussion group. Meeting every other week, barring a 2 month break while we got married, we finally finished reading the 'The Reason for God,' in December 2018.

Quite a few non-Christians attended regularly throughout the whole course. Some openly claimed to be agnostics, others didn't put any labels on themselves but were genuinely curious about what we have to say in Christianity's defense.

I wanted the group (8-10 people) to meet in our home, as inviting people over, is an essential step to developing relationships, the best way to show trust, and that you appreciate their friendship. Hospitality is an important value within our church-plant, so we start each meeting with a meal, and I am so grateful for my wife's God-given cooking skills! A local rabbi once told me "a meeting with food is better than a meeting without food".



This is simple, yet so true. After the food we moved to heavier food - for our hearts and souls, discussing part of the chapter and the theme that it dealt with.

The most encouraging moment for me was when one of our regular attendees, an agnostic who claims we will never know whether God exists or not said: "The doctrine of predestination fascinates me. A God who is all-knowing and all-powerful is a very different idea from what we are used to". The group wants to keep meeting, so we will continue this year and will read C.S. Lewis' "Mere Christianity."

**Becoming a Christian is a process, in most cases, a very long process and journey. But if equipping those who are on the way to becoming Christians, with convincing arguments is a role we can play, then it's a privilege to do it.**





# Secular Schools in Portugal and Being Generous!

by Carlos Freitas

## Portugal Schools / THE STATS:

In 2017 there were 3729 preschools in Portugal.

- 61% are secular public preschools,
- 35% are secular private preschools,
- 4% are Roman Catholic preschools.

How times have changed!

It's not exactly news that schools throughout much of Europe are growing increasingly secular, but in Portugal, a country with a strong Roman Catholic heritage and tradition, it has been notable that the Catholic Church has been losing its power and authority in the state's affairs. This secularization can be seen not least in the education system here.

## THE STORY:

We have three children: Salomé (7), Daniel (4) and Maria (1) and part of our ministry in the community is done through Preschool.

It all began in 2014 when we met an American missionary family, the Gerecke's, who introduced us to a variety of resources for bringing the gospel to kids (eg. "Resurrection Eggs" for Easter, and the "Candy Cane Story" for Christmas). During the following three years we developed a relationship with Salomé's preschool teacher and each year, we went into the school to share the Easter and Christmas Bible stories, organize fun activities, and decorate cookies.



It has been exciting to have this opportunity, and one thing we have learned from it is generosity. As Christians, of course, we know we should be generous without expecting any return but we were able to model this to the staff and children, as we shared the gospel with them. The teachers and school staff saw this generosity. When two families, plus volunteers showed up to school, for an hour and a half, to spend time with the children- people noticed. They saw generosity in the arts and crafts offered, in the homemade cookies, decorations and other goodies hidden inside the 300 eggs provided for the egg hunt.

As they saw this generosity in action, they also heard about God's generosity to them through Jesus.

Children grow up however, and opportunities change, so when Salomé moved on to primary school, Daniel started preschool. At the end of the 2017/18 school year we found out that Daniel's teacher (previously Salomé's teacher, with whom we had developed a strong relationship) was leaving. 'Back to square one,' we thought but how wrong we were!

Before the start of the school year, I went to the school to get some information and inadvertently interrupted a meeting between the headteacher, and the primary and preschool teachers. Much to my surprise, the new teacher said that they had heard about our activities and cookies, and they were expecting our participation again this year! We were thrilled!

Times are changing, obstacles may vary but God remains the same. We thought the door opened because we opened it, by being nice and friendly, to a teacher, but it turns out that God is a generous God, who opens doors, and keeps them open according to His will.







**MOSTAR CITY**

# Bosnia Team 2019

● **29th June - 8th July**

## **Where?**

ECM Ireland is taking a team to Bugojno, Bosnia, to serve alongside a small church plant of Bosnian believers.

## **What?**

The team will lead English classes for children and young people in Bugojno. There will also be an opportunity to help with a 5 Day Club and to pray for the town and region.

**Cost: £500 all inclusive**

Travel date may vary +/- one day depending on flight costs.

**Interested in joining this team?**  
**Contact Charlie Anderson**  
**on 07782561208**

## **Why?**

Because evangelical Christians make up about 0.05% of the population (that is only 5 in every 10,000) they need help. Bosnia is probably the least Christian country in Europe.

## **Who?**

We would like young (or not so young) people who are mature believers and can talk freely about their faith but who also see the need to pray and can cope with a programme which might not be tightly scripted.



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registered charity no: 102665