

SUMMER 2023

ECM LIFE

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION IRELAND
NEWSLETTER

CONNECT



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



In a rural setting of Serbia, our ECM missionaries there hosted an informal gathering in May made up of Serbian Pastors, ECM Missionaries, Ireland Council members and other Church planters. The purpose? To explore how working together would help support and develop the ECM work in that region. This is a concrete example of why 'CONNECT' is a key aspect of ECM work. With the biblical example of Paul celebrating 'partnership in the Gospel' (Philippians 1v5) in mind, I left this gathering celebrating the developing network of support among our mission family in that area.

In the last issue, our focus was 'EQUIP' and this time we are exploring our other key value which is 'CONNECT'. The articles within will provide some examples of ways we seek to do this and here are some other expressions of ways we want to continue and develop the 'CONNECT' aspect of our work in ECM Ireland:

Connecting through communication

the ECM Ireland website has been updated and by visiting it you will see plenty of information about all that is happening ecmireland.org

Connecting with partners in mission – one of the great strengths of Bangor Worldwide is uniting mission agencies in working together in mission. This year Kostya Bakanov will be speaking, and we will be exhibiting in the Global Village – please drop by if you are at the event.

Connecting through networks – the Serbian example described above highlights the importance of networking

through the sharing of vision and resources across our mission.

Connecting with local Churches – Jesus commissioned the local Church with the missionary task, and we would be keen to partner with your Churches in reaching Europe with the Gospel. If you would like a speaker, someone to meet with your missionary group or to explore mission opportunities in Europe then please contact us to explore this further.

Connecting with you – we are ever grateful for the encouragement and prayer of people who support ECM Ireland. One way we would like to acknowledge that is to invite you along to our *Supporters' Day on Saturday 30th September*. You will hear updates from some of our visiting missionaries and the ECM International Director, Simon Marshall, will also be with us.

Read on and enjoy more stories of how we are seeking to 'CONNECT'.

Geoff, Director, ECM Ireland

GREECE FACTFILE

Greece includes 6,000 islands and islets scattered in the Greek Seas, of which only 227 islands are inhabited.

POPULATION

10,277,556



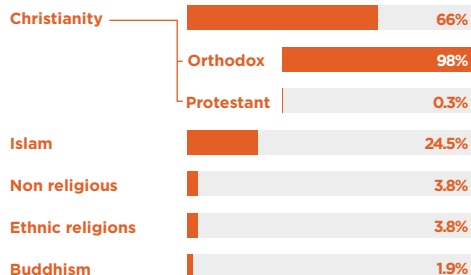
UNREACHED PEOPLE

226,000 (2.2%)



Officially 98 percent of the population is part of the Greek Orthodox Church. Only 0.3 percent of the Greeks are Protestant. It is generally assumed that to be Greek is to be Greek Orthodox.

BELIEFS



Official figures point to a total of 9,792 parish and monastery churches, but this figure does not include the hundreds of privately owned places of worship and chapels in cemeteries.

PRAY FOR GREECE

Millions of visitors are drawn to Greece by its celebrated combination of history, climate, food and coastline, all of which remain understandable sources of pride for modern Greeks. Today's Greece, however, separated from the glory days of the classical era and the 1000-year Byzantine Empire by 400 years of Ottoman occupation, must also reckon with the extraordinary turbulence of the last two centuries: the struggle for independence, nation-building, world wars, civil war, military dictatorship and infamous financial crisis.

The Greek Orthodox Church retains a central place in the life and culture of the nation, yet attendances have dwindled significantly in a country that remains a beguiling and perplexing mix of Western and Eastern cultures. Hostility and suspicion regarding evangelicals has lessened in recent years and their reputation has been further bolstered by an admirable response to the migrant and economic crises.

PRAYER POINTS



Pray for the nation - give thanks that the last few years have brought greater stability and steady recovery after the economic anguish of the preceding decade. Pray for the recently-elected government to be free from corruption and especially to increase freedom. 'Proselytism' remains technically illegal outside of the Orthodox Church which seems a strange anomaly in an EU member state.



Pray for an increased urgency, boldness and clarity in witness and that churches would effectively equip believers to be ready to give the reason for their hope in Christ. Pray especially for wisdom in understanding the surrounding culture and how to live and speak wisely and winsomely among friends, family, neighbours and co-workers.



Pray for unity and shared vision among evangelical churches and organisations in Greece to be able to pray, plan and work together to see healthy and vibrant churches planted in cities and towns across Greece in the years ahead, not only in Athens, where this has begun. Pray that wise conversations about revitalisation would also take place where churches are struggling.

CONNECTING WITH REFUGEES THROUGH ADMINISTRATION



BY DIANE NICHOLLS



I am serving the Lord in Lesvos, Greece as a long-term volunteer with Eurorelief, a humanitarian aid organisation.

Many years ago, as a younger Christian I often wondered if God could ever use my skills in administration for His glory. Years later, in 2018, God asked me to sell my house because he wanted me "untethered". So, I sold it, not knowing what was coming next. A year later He called me to go to Lesvos to volunteer with Eurorelief. I had been there before a few times on short term mission trips and knew about the desperate situation there, but this time He was calling me to serve in administration; not in the camp.

I arrived on September 9 2020 - the morning after the devastating fire that destroyed the Moria Camp. It was chaos, demanding, complicated, exhausting, frustrating, relentless and challenging. However, it was where He wanted me and exactly where I needed to be. And I loved it. I came alive. I knew my purpose.

We have a continual stream of volunteers coming to serve. Many stay for a few weeks, others make longer-term commitments. They come with big smiles, huge hearts of compassion, sleeves rolled up and work boots on, and they make a difference. They smile, despite heartache and trauma. They're patient despite chaos. They're committed despite constant challenges; they go the distance. We have heard so many stories of how refugees from many nations have started a journey of faith in Jesus because they have encountered kindness, love and compassion through our volunteers. Each story I hear humbles me and makes me so thankful. Why? Because without the administration that I do - the applications, the emails, the forms, the texts, the spreadsheets, not one of these volunteers would be here. What a privilege to serve Him.



"The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to their own labour"

1 Corinthians 3:8

Eurorelief: www.eurorelief.net.

Working in Greece



Anna Crawford shares her time between Greece and Northern Ireland.



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

I would say that it's more about calling than about vision. In this past year, it's been about whether I could 'go it alone' in Greece as opposed to being there with Peter. It's been about facing fears and pain, yet at the same time discerning what God's purpose is for my life in Greece. I am still discerning. In May, I went to the island of Samos to take over member care responsibilities and while I was there, I discovered that I had found a new sense of discovery and adventure (which even surprised my family!). Something I had always attributed to my late husband and not myself.

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

I am looking at taking a Prayer Team out to Athens, to work with the Petalouda project that Luciana is involved in. It is Luciana's vision to initiate a church plant among the Roma community. I have also been trying to continue with what Peter had initiated; to develop a connection between the Kypseli church plant, in a suburb of Athens, with my own church, 1st Coleraine Presbyterian.

I have been trying to bring about a greater awareness of the "Threads of Hope" project in Athens, which trains women who have

been rescued from trafficking to have sewing skills by becoming involved in the project and publicising it when I can.

? How have you connected with people across your years of ministry?

Simply by being interested in them as people, trying to listen to their story and keeping up with them in all the ups and downs they encounter and latterly by showing my own vulnerability.

? How are you seeking to connect with others in this season?

My time in Samos taught me in a fresh way that people and especially younger folks are really looking for mentors and people who will walk with them without judgement. Sometimes all people want is encouragement and to receive kind words.

? How can we pray for you this summer?

That I will continue to be open to what God has for me in Greece and that I will learn to enjoy this new season of life and embrace it with all its ups and downs.

CONNECTING WITH OTHER AGENCIES



BY GIORGOS & LUCIANA CHRISTOFORIDES

From the beginning of our time in Greece, it has been on our hearts to cooperate with other ministries and organisations, and to create good partnerships that can strengthen God's kingdom. Over the years, we have had the privilege to help local ministries to partner with each other by sharing time and resources. When Luciana first moved to Greece, she shared her time between two ministries, which ended up working together and forming a wonderful partnership. One practical way was providing accommodation to women who had been sexually exploited or trafficked. These two ministries shared resources and started a cooperation that did not exist before.

Giorgos has been serving with AMG International since 2014. He has shared his IT and network expertise with other ministries. It has been a blessing to have AMG as his platform for serving others. The nature of his networking can vary from events and camps to tech projects and IT consultations. The annual Easter Teen Camp, led by Giorgos, has been in cooperation with Greater Europe Mission (GEM) volunteers for the past 5 years. GEM has been sending volunteers, as part of their Ten2 Project which is a summer short-term missions' program for college students seeking to engage cross-cultural ministry in Europe.

Other organisations and institutions that we have been working with are Scripture Union, the Greek Bible College, Christian Refugee Relief, Community House Damaris and EuroRelief. Giorgos has provided internet access, surveillance, and network installations to their venues (counselling

centre, elderly home, shelter, refugee camp). Luciana has been serving with Hellenic Ministries since 2016 and it has more than 10 projects, ranging from medical aid to community development. She has been leading the Petalouda Centre which has benefited from partnerships with medical teams, churches, and local authorities. A recent milestone has been the cooperation with local schools. Petalouda aims to help the Roma community with education and over the past 7 years, 170+ children have enrolled in the local schools. We have been closely working with the teachers and principals of those schools.

We love being able to live out the core value of ECM: 'Together - Effective Partnerships'. Throughout the years, we have learned how these partnerships and connections are intrinsically deeper when God is at the centre. They have been established in faith, and "rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17).

CONNECTING WITH SUPPORTERS

BY PRIMROSE AVILA, SERVING IN THE BALKANS

Here in our corner of the Western Balkans, there aren't a lot of opportunities for connections in ministry locally. Sometimes it feels that there are too few people for too large a task, and very few of them live in our small town. To get here, you drive 40 minutes from the capital city, followed by a beautiful 30-minute drive through low mountains. Eventually, you see the town nestled down in a valley 15 minutes before you arrive. Once you arrive, it feels like the end. And that's because it almost is, very close to the international border marked by rolling green hills and red-roofed villages. The church we attend is a 40-minute drive in a different direction.

It could be easy to feel alone in our little corner, but we have been thankful over all the years for the deep commitment of people around the world who are dedicated in their prayers for us. There are churches who have known us for years, and those we've got to know more recently. There are life-long friends who have stood by us, with us, and for us. There are new friends, drawn together because of our mutual love for Christ and His Church. There are small groups who humble us with their remembrance of us and our town in prayer.

While our physical situation might seem isolated, we certainly aren't. This summer, we are welcoming two young people, eager to serve the Lord, explore mission and share their faith through kids and youth camps and the relationships they build. This spring, we welcomed a young couple with the same desires, and a father-daughter duo who also lived with us

and served alongside us for three weeks. In the past, there have been individuals, Bible College interns and short-term teams of all sizes and backgrounds, here for a couple of weeks or longer.

These people become much more than passing connections; they become co-workers, prayer partners, friends. They take the message home; sharing with others and encouraging churches to pray and get more involved in mission. Three of those who have been here this year were inspired by the testimony of another who visited last winter on a vision trip. A past Bible College intern is now pastoring a church that prays for the people we work with. Some previous short-termers are now among our dearest friends and those who care most deeply for us. They know us well because they have lived with us, laboured together with us, and prayed with us in our home and town.

ECM Biennial

UNIQUE EXPERIENCES
AT UMAG, CROATIA

BY ANDREW MCCORMICK,
CHAIR OF ECM IRELAND COUNCIL

I know that I am among many ECMers who know the Biennial Conferences as a highpoint at any time, but there was something very special about the first event since 2018. It really was a unique opportunity for the whole mission to come together before the Lord, and enjoy worship, fellowship, Bible teaching, collective prayer – and lots of fun!

With over 400 attending, more than a third of these for the first time, this was larger than ever before. As always, there was an evening for the ECM Ireland family to spend time together, and even with (inevitably) a few people unable to be there, we had a crowded room to take time getting to hear about some of the great things that are happening, and for Geoff and the whole staff team to meet the missionaries.

The wider ECM International family is vibrant and full of a wonderful diversity of ministries, some of which were highlighted in conference reports. These include a moving discussion with the Ukrainian ECMers, which was immensely challenging and encouraging to us all. Some formal business on the governance of the mission was completed in an orderly way, to help ensure that those essentials are secured

faithfully, and that all of us can focus on what we are all committed to, in sharing and spreading the good news of Jesus across Europe.

There was a great range of informative seminars, allowing aspects of our lives and work to be explored in new ways. Alison and I were involved in prayer ministry on previous occasions, but this year a new team from Northern Ireland, led by Rev Derek McKelvey, came for that purpose and made a valuable contribution to support the Mission, something I know they found to be richly rewarding.

The Biennial provides a unique opportunity for missionaries, staff, trustees and supporters of ECM to step back from the day-to-day and reflect on what is happening. Spain in 2025 is something to look forward to.



ECM IRELAND AT THE BIENNIAL 2023

Noah Bartlett,
Northern Ireland

As I sat in the gardens one day at the Biennial I was overcome by doubt and despair wondering if I even believed. I begged God to show me some sign He was still there. The next morning as Helder preached God filled me such assurance of His presence. Biennial 2023 was nothing less than a faith changing event for me!

Aislinn Duffy,
Spain

This year was my first Biennial, and it was a joy being able to stop, disconnect from the routine of ministry in Spain and connect with God through the Bible teaching and worship, as well as connect with others over coffee and good chats. It was a real blessing being able to recharge batteries in a space where other missionaries understood the challenges and joys of ministry life.

Lila Kercmar,
Slovenia

It was absolutely wonderful to see the old and new faces of ECM, reconnecting

with some and meeting new people. Joining together for worship, teaching and prayer with so many others from different countries was a special treat particularly after being apart for a number of years.

Lourdes Williamson,
ECM Ireland office

A great opportunity to be encouraged and challenged, enjoying friendship and fellowship with the ECM family.

Shane McGloin,
Portugal

2023 was my first time at the Biennial, and it was a great experience. I had met so many of the missionaries over zoom, but it was great to meet them face to face and get to know them properly. I was enriched by the bible teaching, encouraged by the fellowship and had an overall good experience. There are things that I took, particularly from seminars, that I can implement in my work in Portugal.

A man with a beard and short hair is sitting in a church pew, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark t-shirt. The church interior is dimly lit, with light streaming through colorful stained glass windows in the background. The windows feature various religious scenes and figures. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

SUMMER 2023

CONNECTING LONELINESS, MENTAL HEALTH AND CHURCH ATTENDANCE



BY ROSALIENE DONALDSON

There has been much talk in the media about the increase of mental ill-health. Nearly one billion people worldwide suffer from some form of mental disorder, according to the latest UN data. Everyone's life touches someone with a mental health condition. There have been numerous reasons identified including:

- Financial pressures and job performance pressures and insecurities
- Reduced face-to-face interactions and social support structures
- Negative effects of social media
- The decline of marriages and breakdown of the family unit
- Loneliness and social isolation

Loneliness is a serious public health problem. Research has shown that chronic and severe loneliness and social isolation pose a threat to health and wellbeing, and

can lead to a decline in physical health, a cognitive decline, sleep deprivation, mental ill-health and substance abuse.

Simultaneously, church attendance is in decline in many countries in Europe. How does church attendance impact someone's physical and mental health? Research carried out by Harvard found that church attendance has a positive effect on physical and mental well-being, i.e., regular attenders are more optimistic, have lower depression rates and are less likely to commit suicide.



Church-attenders are socially connected with different generations, sharing joys and struggles and serving each other. They receive teaching about God, who is transcendent as well as intimately present in their lives; a God who became vulnerable, dealt with sin and death and gives a hope for an eternity where believers will have no tears, sickness or death. Their faith fosters peace, brings meaning to world events and strengthens resilience.

However, often those struggling with these issues feel left out of church community. According to the WHO, 1 in 7 people in the world are disabled, but often we do not see them being represented in our church. Many don't feel like they belong as they struggle with ill-health, including mental ill-health. Families with children with disabilities stop attending altogether, often struggling with isolation, tiredness, concerns about daily living and future provision. Coming to church can be met with overcoming obstacles including accessing the church facilities, the sense of having to explain the condition and being a burden on others, dealing with opinions about the reason for the illness or solutions for their health, leading to added sense of failure, hurt or rejection.

When Jesus encountered suffering, He was filled with compassion; He wept, He restored them back to health and in relationship with God. He did not try and give simplistic explanations of the reasons of someone's ill health, but urged His followers to consider what God was doing. Jesus went out of his way to visit the isolated and the outcasts and brought them right into the centre of a community and welcomed them back.

What is our response? Are we like Job's friends, quick to seek who is to blame for suffering? God rebuked his friends, and He urged Job to consider His greatness and Job's limitations. Often suffering we encounter, including mental illness, cannot be explained simply, but we are urged to consider who God is.

Will we follow Jesus' example and seek out those who are suffering and bring them out of their isolation and into the community of God's family.

If you would like to find out more and receive practical information on this, then please contact the Ireland office to get a copy of 'Welcoming those living with disabilities'.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY



BY JONATHAN McCracken



1. Be real....

We share common needs and concerns whether it is to do with where we live, where we shop or how we relate to our families and friends at home, at work or socially. This usually involves contact with people in some shape or form and so natural opportunities to connect with people are all around us.



2. Be aware...

The natural opportunities that exist around us to talk or spend some time with others can be viewed socially, but more importantly, they can be viewed spiritually. How do we see others in the light of the gospel?



3. Be realistic...

It takes time to get to know people and so connecting on a deeper level involves patience. Simple things like calling in on a new neighbour to say hello might break the ice for deepening friendships later.



4. Be creative...

Social media can help make connections with people in different ways. Leaflets and fliers also serve to inform people as to where they might go to find out more.



5. Be yourself...

Connecting with people is easier if there is a particular activity or interest that you enjoy and where you can feel relaxed at an informal level.

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: _____

Supporters Day
30 September
 10:30am - 2:30pm
 Ballymacoss Ave
 Lisburn BT28 2GX

Come along to hear from
ECM International Director,
ECM Ireland missionaries,
updates, prayer & lunch.

 **RSVP to lorna.moore@ecm1.org**

You're invited
A TASTE OF GREECE

SATURDAY 12 AUGUST
7-9PM
ORANGEFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

RSVP TO LORNA.MOORE@ECM1.ORG

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

Thank God for:

• ?

Pray for:

• ?



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