

news

SPRING 2019



STRATEGIES TO IMPACT EUROPE P6

PRAYER FUEL P10 POWER IN WEAKNESS P14

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION

ecm.oz@ecmi.org

www.ecmaustralia.org

Australia

PO Box 15

Croydon NSW 2132

Phone 02 9747 5446

New Zealand

PO Box 10015

The Wood, Nelson 7047

Email ecm.nz@ecmi.org

Phone +64 22 303 9667

European Christian Mission (Australia and New Zealand)

is an interdenominational missionary organisation, based in Sydney, and part of European Christian Mission International. European Christian Mission (Australia section) is fully registered and has up-to-date records with the Australian Charities (64054215388) and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

ECM News is a quarterly publication produced by ECM Australia and NZ.

© 2019 European Christian Mission Australia and New Zealand Inc.

Editor: Sharon Hall

Editorial Assistance:

Phillippa Crossan

Designer: Alan George

Front Cover Image:

Jo Gamble

For information and feedback, email
admin.oz@ecmi.org

WHAT DOES YOUR TYPICAL ECM COUNCIL MEMBER LOOK LIKE?



We have recently had four new people join our ECM Council. The Council exists to support Matt George, ECM Director – Australia & NZ, in his directorship of the mission and missionaries, and to oversee aspects like financial accounts, policies and property.

One of our new members is Jo Gamble (pictured front cover and above with family). As a volunteer Council member, Jo brings both a strong commitment to God's mission in the world, and a wealth of experience in the corporate world.

Jo writes about her decision to follow Christ:

"The truth about Jesus' life, death and resurrection is what convicted me to follow Jesus. He is a person and it is an event that demands a response because there are consequences for both this life and the life to come. If I reject it or ignore it, then there is a life of hollowness, judgement and death. However, if I believe and trust in it, then there are blessings, both in this life and the life to come. In this life, the blessings are not so much material but definitely emotional and spiritual. Knowing God provides the framework for life, because God is the one who created it and knows how it should run. In knowing God I am able to better know myself and those around me."

Jo shares her reasons for volunteering on the ECM Council:

"[It is] a way of serving God's wider Church. It is a way to be part of the global mission work without being sent. I can bring some of my professional skills from the corporate world into governance on Council. In serving on Council, I am able to help the mission organisation develop robust strategies to care for the missionaries on the field, link with supporters well and also see longevity of the mission work."

We're delighted to have Jo and others join our Council to help see the growth of God's kingdom in Europe.

Interested in finding out more?

Contact the ECM office on 02 9747 5446.

NEW SUNRISES

Here at Razorback, autumn and winter bring beautiful sunrises. Each morning a fresh portrait is painted across the horizon. Sometimes those sunrises bring with them a sense of freshness and hope. Other mornings, it's a sense of relief that a dark night is over. However those sunrises are received, that great big, bright light has a way of interrupting and reconfiguring. A powerful, daily gift from the one who created the sun and sustains each rising.

As I pull back the curtains each morning and take in the new view, I'm struck by how little control (none, actually!) that I have over the sunrise and its colour or variation. It's simply there before me. Recently, I heard a missionary reflect on how they'd returned to their field of ministry to find things startlingly different – disturbingly so. There was nothing they could do, nothing familiar to grasp hold of. Yet, like the sun itself, there's always a familiar presence in those sometimes jarring, sometimes creeping-upon-us changes. God is in those changes. He is with us as we face those changes.

My father's favourite hymn, and one that brings a swelling to my throat and a tear to my eye, contains these words:

“Morning by morning new mercies I see. Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not. As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.”

The sun in its daily course reminds us of God's faithfulness and love in the midst of each day's challenges and changes.

In this Spring edition of *ECM News*, you'll be reminded of the enduring power of God's word to change hearts in Europe. The strategy to impact Europe is not a new strategy. You'll read Matt's reflections on the way that God, the creator of the universe and riser of the sun, works most powerfully through our weakness. You'll be encouraged to pray for Chloe as she trusts her faithful Lord to guide her into a new phase of ministry with sunrises not yet seen.

Recently we were joined by a number of others for an evening of prayer for Romania and for the Grocotts working there. There was nothing really new about that gathering. We shared some food. We heard some news. We prayed. Yet, it was so encouraging. Meeting together to trust our powerlessness into God's all-powerful hands. May you be encouraged to do the same as you read this edition.

Sharon Hall
Editor – *ECM News*





ECM NATIONAL CONFERENCE

GOD CAN WORK IN ANY PLACE!

At the recent ECM National Conference, the International Director of ECM International, Chris Wigram, spoke to us from some of the Minor Prophets. Here are some reflections from one of his talks on the book of Jonah.

“When you look at the book of Jonah, you see a lot about God!”

God’s message to the Ninevites, through Jonah, was a message of coming judgement but also the possibility that God would bring salvation. “Forty more days and Ninevah will be overthrown”. The overturning could be destruction, but it could also be a ‘turning around’, a change, a transformation. “In God’s heart for the nations, he gives both warning and time for response.”

While the book of Jonah reveals God’s great grace for the people of Ninevah. It also reveals Jonah’s selfishness about that same grace. In 2 Kings 14:23-25, The evil King Jeroboam is used by God to restore the nation of Israel, through Jonah’s message. “Jonah is selective about grace. He’s very willing to work for the nation of Israel being restored. But at the same time God is working for the nations of the world!”

The vine that God gives and takes away acts as a visual aid, asking ‘What do you value? What does God value?’

“Despite Jonah’s theological orthodoxy, his heart was revealed in the unguarded mercy of God. Likewise, when you go beyond our own culture, you’ll be confronted by what you really think!”



A STRATEGY TO IMPACT EUROPE



As part of the National Conference, a ‘Consider Europe’ evening was held on the Saturday night. We heard from Chris Wigram about approaches to reach modern Europe:

“We need missionaries who are: theologically faithful, not liberal; ‘ecclesiologically adventurous in different contexts; ‘prophetic’, simply by teaching the Bible; and committed to the development of young leaders.”

On the night we heard interviews with three young men currently training at Sydney Missionary and Bible College with the intention of heading back to Europe to serve God there. Samuel is planning to return to Portugal, to use his training among university students. Jotham is planning to return to Germany to serve the church there. Ross, after completing a two year short-term mission trip to

the Republic of Ireland, is now receiving further training with the hope of returning to Ireland.

In the past, ECM has also worked in partnership with students coming from Austria to Australia to study at SMBC. The Pohns and the Haemmerles have been encouraged to see their training here in Australia, put to good use, as they’ve returned with ECM support to serve the Church in Austria.

While we heard of the many challenges in Europe at this time, it was heartening to hear that the courageous preaching of God’s word will have the greatest impact for God’s glory on that continent.

Toward the end of the evening we were led in a prayer based on **Psalm 138**:

*We praise you Lord, with all our heart,
Before the so called 'gods' of our time, we will
sing your praise. We bow to your rule and
praise your name.*

*You are loving and faithful, and have exalted
your name and your word above all things,*

*We call to you for courage and strong hearts
in this time, knowing you will answer us.*

*We ask this also for those sharing your good
news in Europe,*

*May all the kings of the earth, all the rulers
of Europe, praise you, O Lord, when they hear
the words of your mouth,*

*May they sing of your ways, for your glory is
great.*

*Lord, though you are on high, you look upon
the lowly. You look on the proud from afar.*



Dan and Beth Carmody being interviewed by Sam Boog

*But you walk with us, your people, in the
midst of our trouble, you preserve our life.
Heavenly Father, we plead for those who are
yet under your wrath, who are yet to bow to
your rule.*

*Lord, fulfil your purpose in us, in your gospel
workers sent into Europe,*

Your love endures forever.

*We pray for multitudes to come and to know
your love in Christ,*

For your glory, Amen.



PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks to God for the ECM National Conference. Pray that it continues to resonate in the the lives of those who attended. Pray that it will spur them on to be self-sacrificial disciples of Jesus and active in God's mission in Europe.



Pray for...

ITALY

Beautiful coasts and mountains, fabulous art treasures and amazing historical sites draw millions of tourists to Italy each year. About 90% of Italians are identified as Roman Catholic, although only about a third of these describe themselves as active members. The Roman Catholic church has lost millions of adherents to cults, the occult and materialistic secularism. Now, even the Pope has stated that Italy is a mission field. Here are some statistics and fuel for prayer.



PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for church planting ministries in Italy and evangelism, especially in urban centers.
- Pray for training initiatives that are biblically sound and culturally relevant.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- People who can reach out to areas in Italy without an evangelical witness in the Trento and Brescia regions.
- Ministry to university students through IFES.

POPULATION

59.28M



1,353 births per day



289 net immigration per day



1,673 deaths per day

Italy is a rapidly aging country. Migration is helping slow the rate of population decline.

UNREACHED PEOPLE

2,093,000

Italy is one of the most under-reached nations in Europe

CHURCHES



There are over 67,000 (Catholic) churches still in use in Italy, however 1000s more are deconsecrated ones.



GROWTH OF RELIGIONS



Hinduism is the fastest growing religion in Italy, mainly due to migration from countries such as India and Pakistan.

BIBLICAL TRAINING

Most evangelical pastors and church workers have had no formal Bible school training.

BELIEFS IN ITALY

Believe in God 74%

Believe in Spirit or Life Force 20%

Do not believe in God 6%

CHRISTIAN WITNESS



Only 1,500 of Italy's 33,500 communities have an established evangelical witness.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The gospel was brought to Italy from the very beginning when the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Rome and preached the gospel. However, the evangelical movement has been overshadowed by the dominant Roman Catholic Church and traditions.

CHRISTIAN AFFILIATION

Catholics 84.37%

Evangelicals 0.63%

Orthodox 1.74%

Muslim 2.6%

Other/ No Religion 10.66%

Evangelicals are a tiny minority in Italy, at less than 1% of the population

Sources: ecmi.org, joshuaproject.net, worldpopulationreview.com

ECM MINISTRY

Church-planting forms the core of ECM work in Italy. Richard Wilson (pictured with family) helps the Evangelical Church of Trento, a church planted by ECM but now autonomous. The church is working towards the planting of second-generation churches with Bible study groups in three of the nearby valleys and towns. In the province of Brescia, the Buschlenks work with an evangelical church in Desenzano in church planting.



TO FIND OUT MORE, CONTACT THE ECM OFFICE FOR OUR ITALY BROCHURE

Join us at our Italian Prayer Evening on 4 November (see back cover).



PRAYER FUEL

FOR MISSIONARIES

George and Sandra Hammerle, Austria

The church in which we minister recently had a summer Kids' Camp. We've been running this camp for a few years now. Each year there are a lot of unchurched kids that come, with no contact with the gospel throughout the rest of the year. It's a great opportunity!

Please pray that those kids who heard God's word taught over the summer camp will take that word in and that their hearts will be good soil. Especially those who will have no ongoing contact with the church until the next camp, we ask for prayer that God's word will keep growing in their hearts and that the devil will not take it away.



Above: the Hammerle family

We also give thanks to God for some recent encouragement in the area of church music. We've started writing new songs as a church, to sing them in our own language, from our own people. I (Sandra) have also recently stepped up to take on the role of Music Coordinator in the church. I love the creative side of it, but sometimes find it hard to deal with uncomfortable situations and conflict. You could pray that I really grow in that ministry and be an encouragement with the communities of believers.

- *Give thanks for the summer Kids' Camp and pray for God's continuing work in the hearts of the children who attended in July.*
- *Pray for George's energy levels and for wisdom in his ministry.*
- *Give thanks for the wonderful new songs the church have written together. Pray that the songs might lift their hearts in worship to God, and that there would be increasing unity as they do that together.*
- *Pray for Sandra as she coordinates the music ministry.*



Above: Chloë Wolfson

Chloë Wolfson, Spain

After eight years in the small church of Peñarroya-Pueblonuevo, and finishing up there at the end of June, September will be a time for exploring my ministry options for the next step. My main hope is that God will make this undeniably clear. Meanwhile I continue to be involved in coordinating short-term opportunities across ECMI.

Leaving town has been bitter-sweet, but I have been able to appreciate just how good my friends are, and how special the place

God has carved for me in the community. In our church, recently things have been happening: new people and new challenges. I've been delighted in God's reminder that it's His Church and He in no way needs me to get on with growing and enriching it, but delights to let us see the fruit sometimes.

I am thankful for God's provision over the last 10 years:

- **From Australia:** many supporters maintaining me on the field and participating in ministry through prayer.
- **In the town:** friendships, opportunities and groups through which God has given me rich relationships and a community.
- **In the local church:** they have become my teachers, guides, friends and family and I will miss them tremendously.
- **Through Peter and Kate:** My ECM colleagues are an incredible example of holiness, brotherly affection, peace and joy, lived out in the most barren of environments.

- *Pray that God would help Chloë to rest in Him and focus more on who she is in Him, while she explores where she'll be and what she'll be doing.*
- *Pray for the church in Peñarroya, that new people will take the opportunity to step into any gaps. Pray that Peter and Kate will have wisdom as they grow the church into stability and independence from missionaries.*
- *Please pray for Chloë's many friends and contacts in the town who will now have no daily contact with a believer. While there are young families in the church from towns within a 40 minute radius, Chloë has been the only Christian under the age of 60 living in the town. Ask for God to send or raise up another from within the town who will be a daily witness, living for Jesus in Peñarroya.*

PRAYER FUEL

FOR MISSIONARIES (CONTINUED)

Ian and Vivian Dennis, Australia

“The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe” – Proverbs 18:10

The need for occupational safety is greatly emphasised in the maritime industry. When there is danger, seafarers are known to call on many names for their security - Allah, Buddha, or even Mary. Christian seafarers, those who are righteous in Christ, prove time and again that the Name of the Lord gives them security in every realm.

Simon, shown in the picture below, is a Christian seaman from Fiji who we had not seen for about 15 years. He has now joined a ship on the Melbourne route and has a good testimony of the Lord’s keeping him over that period on land and sea. As Simon ‘runs’ to the Lord for grace and mercy daily, pray that his testimony will be powerful and cause many on his ship to call upon the Name of the Lord – not just for physical safety, but for their salvation.



Above: Ian and Vivian Dennis

An officer on a ship that regularly crosses the Tasman Sea between New Zealand and Melbourne recently shared how his ship had been rolling 40 degrees each way on its last voyage. For us on the land it is hard to understand such danger and extremes, but we can point them to the promise in Psalm 107:28 of God’s protection for those who call upon the true and living God. Another seaman showed us his religious tattoos including a long prayer tattooed down one side of his chest and back, trusting them to keep him safe, but such men need to know the reality of Romans 10:13 – *“Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved”*.

- *Pray that Ian and Vivian will have many opportunities to tell seafarers of the spiritual safety found only in Christ.*
- *Pray for Simon, that he will also speak and live in a way that will cause many fellow seafarers to ask questions. He has recently started a church service on his ship with three other crew coming along. Pray that many will put their trust in the Lord, as Simon has.*



BEARING WITNESS TO CHRIST IN GERMANY



Caren Laubscher has recently been sent from ECM Australia & NZ to serve as a short term missionary in Germany for one full year until August 2020. Caren shares her story below.

As I am about to embark on a year-long mission trip to Germany with various fears and weaknesses, I am reassured by God's message to Moses: "Child, this is not about you, but it is about Me and I AM with you".

I grew up in a traditional protestant culture in South Africa (Afrikaans). In God's mercy, at age 14 my eyes were opened to true, biblical Christianity – centred on Jesus. I immigrated from South-Africa to New Zealand at 16, and then again to Australia seven years later.

I had exposure to different languages from a young age and then had the opportunity to study and work in Germany and France in my early twenties. I sensed God directing my paths toward missionary work but first He led me to become a medical doctor. Through some big life challenges such as suffering a rare disease that destroyed my hearing at age 25 (which required me to have a cochlear implant), God has been teaching me to long for something better than worldly comfort or success. That is, Christ himself, the Great I AM. He is God's

great gift to the world I want to share.

Culturally speaking, I am drawn to Germany, as the Afrikaans culture I grew up with has Germanic roots. I long for German people to taste and see and hear the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the needs are great. Postmodern secularism and materialism have gripped the nation's heart. It is estimated that less than 2% of Germans belong to genuinely Bible-believing churches.

I will spend the bulk of my year in Germany in the town of Freiburg, where I will be studying International Health as a postgraduate student. Here I have an amazing opportunity to serve Christ's mission and to gain skills that will equip me further for medical missions. I will partner with the university student ministry group (called 'SMD'), and the ECM team in Germany, in the area of refugee ministry. Please pray that I might bear witness to Christ as I have opportunity and encourage the ECM team.

WHAT'S ON MATT'S MIND?

Matt George
ECM Director – Australia & NZ



“Most gladly, therefore, I will boast in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell with me”. 2 Cor 12:9

I was recently interviewed at Moore Theological College chapel as part of their Missions Awareness Week. They asked me some very specific questions about my time as a missionary in Portugal, particularly in regards to their theme for the week, ‘Power in Weakness’.

The longer I remained in Portugal, the more I became convinced that God worked for his glory much more powerfully through my weaknesses than what I perceived to be my strengths. When I first started to see this, it came as something of a shock. Before I went to Portugal, I imagined effective missionary work under God was a matter of adapting the model of gospel ministry I had grown accustomed to in Australia to the Portuguese context. This view emphasised God working through strengths, such as language learning, cultural intelligence and giftedness.

While there is some truth in this approach, it explains little of the enormity of the missionary task. So much of being a missionary is God working through your weakness, your frailty and your limitations. For one thing, to become Portuguese to win the Portuguese, you have to undergo a significant

Portuguese would open up about their weaknesses too, which led to greater depth in relationships and opportunities for evangelism and discipleship. Even though I never got to the level of a native speaker (as hard as I tried!), God used my imperfect speech. In my Portuguese, spoken with an

“The longer I remained in Portugal, the more I became convinced that God worked ... more powerfully through my weaknesses”

stream of deaths to self: death to the comforts and conveniences of living in your own culture, giving up close proximity to family and friends, the shame of looking and sounding like a child as you learn a new language and a new way of doing things, and embracing the struggle to be flexible.

Cross-cultural missionaries are a great example of God’s power for salvation at work through weak human instruments. As I opened up about my weaknesses,

Aussie accent, I had countless opportunities to declare God’s glorious gospel and teach and train Portuguese for his ministry and mission.

This is not always the way we think of missionaries, is it? Sometimes we put them on a pedestal because of their commitment, sacrifice and ability to work across cultures. We place pressure on them to list strengths, triumphs and results. How much sweeter and true is the reality that we partner with those who carry treasure in jars of clay.

QUICK SNIPPETS

Find out what God is doing in Europe!

■ With thanks to God: Derweses

We give thanks to God for Marcel & Daphne Dewerse and the countless number of hours they have devoted to ECM in NZ, a ministry that stretches all the way back to the 1980s. Marcel, a Belgian who spent time in Congo as an engineer, developed a heart for missions and mission in Europe early in life. In Congo he met Daphne, a Kiwi, who went there on missionary service. They have contributed to the Lord's work in many indispensable ways: through hosting prayer meetings and ECM workers on their travels, providing administrative and financial support, and also representing the work of ECM at mission conferences, churches and events. May God continue to bless their retirement and the next phase in his service. Féy Cotter has now taken on the mantle for ECM work in NZ.

■ Farewell to the Balls

Simon and Danielle Ball, together with son Darcy, said a sad goodbye to Ireland in August. Pray for a blessed journey, re-entry and saying thank you to their partners in mission back in Australia. We look to God for the next phase of gospel ministry in Ireland and the prospect of sending many other workers, such as Dan and Beth Carmody, who would, God-willing, like to be in Ireland by the end of 2019.

■ An update on the Carmodys

Dan and Beth write: "Our desire is to see the Church in Ireland grow and we're excited that the Lord is at work revealing such a plentiful harvest. Please pray that the Lord would give us patience in waiting for a decision from Irish Immigration, hopefully by the end of August. Pray for God's wisdom in working through some medical issues that have arisen over the past few months. We need God's clear direction as we consider these issues."



ecm

Sharing Christ's love
in Europe

response
form



YES, I want to be
part of changing **EUROPE**

Name: _____
Street: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Postcode: _____
Phone: _____
Email: _____

I/We would like to:

Receive this quarterly magazine by:

Email Post

Receive ECM's monthly prayer diary by:

Email Post

Support by financially giving \$ _____

Monthly Quarterly One-off

Designate my gift to the below missionary or project or wherever it is needed most (please specify allocation): _____

Please send a receipt for my gift by:

Email Post

I/We would like to give by:

Direct Deposit (preferred method)

Australia: BSB 082171 (NAB); account 509197512
(European Christian Mission).

New Zealand: BSB 010 288; account 000547500.

Please use reference of surname of missionary or project name + your initial and surname e.g. "Reeve A.Brown"

Cheque — made payable to
"European Christian Mission"

Credit card Visa Mastercard

Name on card: _____

Card number:

Expiry: /

I give authority to ECM to debit my credit card for the above amount and frequency.

Signature: _____

*** PLEASE NOTIFY OFFICE OF YOUR GIFT**

Or you can give online at
www.ecmaustralia.org

ecm dates

We would love you to join us at these events as we partner together in God's mission in Europe!

FOR YOUR **DIARY**

FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER: REACHOUT PASTORS' DAY

Location: CMS Centre,
Katoomba

Speaker: Ray Galea

This event is particularly for pastors who want to be encouraged and further equipped to support missions and missionaries in their churches.

PASTORS' MISSION DAY 19

FRIDAY 6 SEPTEMBER

SAT & SUN 6-7 SEPTEMBER: REACHOUT CONFERENCE

Location: Katoomba Christian Convention, Katoomba

Speaker: Ray Galea

An inspiring weekend of hearing from God's word and from missionaries serving across the world. ECM will have a stall, giving information on sharing in God's mission purposes around the world.

CROSS THE BRIDGE

TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER: ITALIAN EVENING

Join us for dinner at a local Italian restaurant in Croydon. Over dinner, we'll be updated on points for prayer, with a special focus on the Wilson family working with ECM in Trento. Please contact the ECM office by Monday 4 November for booking reasons.

Italian Dinner & Prayer Night

Please contact the ECM office by Monday 4 November if you're coming, so that we can book enough spaces.