

ECM NEWS

..... SUMMER 2019/20

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AND BACK P7**

**COUNTRY FOCUS –
IRELAND P8**

 **ecm**
European Christian Mission

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)

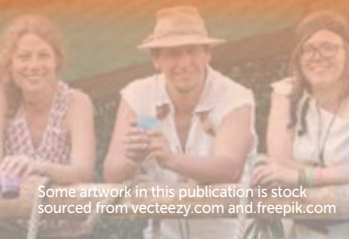
is an interdenominational missionary organisation, based in Sydney, and part of European Christian Mission International. European Christian Mission (Australia section) is fully registered and has up-to-date records with the Australian Charities (64054215388) and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC).

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Editor: Sharon Hall
Editorial Assistance: Phillippa Crossan
Designer: Alan George
Front Cover Image: Samuel Ferriera

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



OUR MISSION

European Christian Mission (ECM) exists as part of God's wider mission in Europe to spread the gospel. We are evangelical and interdenominational, working with all the mainstream evangelical churches for the progress of the gospel in Europe.

OUR VALUES

At every level and across all activities through ECM, we commit ourselves to practising the following core values:

UP

In response to God's saving work in Christ by grace alone, we first and foremost value a godly life. We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, through the word of God and prayer, so that we might be know him, proclaim him and live lives that bring Christ glory and honour in the world.

IN

As God has so valued us that he gave his very own Son for us, so we rightly value one another. We want to be known for loving and caring for each other in thriving teams that work toward Christ's glory.



OUT

Jesus' life on earth was mission-driven: he came to seek and save what was lost. As his followers, we commit to proactively and creatively reaching out to the peoples of Europe, both in word and deed. In order to reach Europe, we value the establishment of new communities of Jesus' followers.

TOGETHER

As God has so valued the world that he gave his very own Son for us, so we rightly value one another. We want to be known for loving and caring for each other in thriving teams that work toward Christ's glory.

<https://www.ecmi.org/our-values>

EDITORIAL

TRUSTING GOD'S PLAN

I was talking with someone recently about the Myers-Briggs personality identifying tool. They had just discovered they were a 'J' among three other letters. This helped them understand why they were so comforted by order and decisiveness. It also highlighted why others in their world who were 'Ps' were so different, not to mention a little challenging!

While God is certainly a God of order, our ordering does not always match up with his. Often, in his sovereign ordering of things, he will leave us in a state of change, or transition, or uncertainty. Our longed-for conclusions are delayed. Our careful plans are sometimes swept aside.

In this issue, you'll read of the Webbs making a small start to a church gathering in Zalla. You'll also read of the big changes in Ireland that have impacted the plans the Carmody family had. You'll read of plans that Samuel and his bride-to-be have for future gospel ministry in Portugal. Each of these people have made plans,

acknowledging that God is ultimately the Lord of the harvest and the planner and implementer of the best of plans. It's living out that belief in God's sovereignty that can often be so challenging for us.

In the midst of uncertainty, we are called to pray. Prayer is not only asking God for his kingdom to come, but expressing our doubt and dependency when that coming seems delayed or its form is difficult to recognise or accept.

An opportunity to express this dependence on God in prayer is planned for February. Please make it your plan to gather with us to pray for Ireland, especially considering the recent changes there for missionaries. God is not beyond changing those changes back. He's also not beyond using those changes for his glory. In fact he promises to always be doing that.

Plan to take some time to read and pray for the many things mentioned in this issue.



Sharon Hall
Editor – ECM News

THE FIELD IS GREEN BUT IS IT OPEN?

.....

SHARON HALL

Ireland once seemed like a straight-forward option for missionary service: same language, same sense of humour. Though a hard and slow field for the gospel, it was one that allowed for Australians to enter and stay as long as they liked. Things have been changing. Sharon Hall (nee Wood) saw the start of these changes during her 17 years serving with ECM in the Republic of Ireland. She writes now of the recent and more significant changes.



In 1998, when I was preparing to live and work in Ireland, the only obstacles in my path were the occasional protests from people at churches where I was visiting to gather partners for that mission work.

On my first church visit, armed with my trusty overhead projector acetate sheets of photos of Ireland, I was shouted at from the congregation, before I'd even got my second sentence out. There was great offence and disbelief that a religious country like Ireland could be considered a mission field! I managed not to cry, changed my presentation on the spot to include a brief explanation of the gospel and what makes one a follower of Jesus, and then went on to later church visits, assuming offence or disbelief in those I was speaking to, addressing that before I got out those coloured acetate sheets! Thankfully, Christians in Australia are now increasingly aware of the immense needs of gospel witness in much of Europe.

For the first 7 years of my time in County Tipperary, arriving and staying was a simple matter of having Harry, the local Garda Superintendent, stamp my passport each year. As it turned out, when I

moved to County Waterford, Harry hadn't registered me properly...but the guy there said that Harry often 'did his own thing' and that he'd sort it out for me! Towards the end of my years in Ireland, restrictions came in only allowing missionaries to stay for 3 years. Some would then get another year or two after that, always asking for special prayer as they visited their local authority. Things are quite different now.

In a recent newsletter from an Aussie family serving with Pioneers in Ireland, Dave and Brooke Wilson describe the difference:

"There are now significant restrictions on the 'Minister of Religion' visa we came here on, which limit this visa to those working in an established congregation, i.e. a church with its own building, a large number of members, and the ability to pay a full wage. In other words, it prevents missionaries or church planters from coming from outside of the European Union. Please pray that God would help those missionaries already here to persevere and have the support we need. Pray that God would change the Immigration Department's attitude to this issue. Most of all, ask that God would raise

up Irish leaders to reach their own nation, and also the means to support them in church planting ministries."

Here in the ECM Australia/NZ family, we've grieved with the Carmody family as they received the sad news that their missionary visa application had been rejected. While a huge change for them in their plans, it also brings home the significance of those recent changes. Where once it was a simple matter of raising a support team

Arriving and staying was a simple matter of stamping my passport each year.

and buying the plane tickets, it now seems that sending missionaries from Australia to the Republic of Ireland will only be possible if they have a European passport or can go as 'tent-makers' (assuming they can get sponsored employment in Ireland).

For those who have followed the work of the gospel in Europe over the past decades, it's evident that in God's sovereign control, access to different nations changes over time, opening



Photo: Former missionary family in Ireland, the Balls

and closing access for missionaries. We pray and trust that Ireland may soon be open again to missionaries serving there.

Naomi Reed, in her heart-warming book of stories from Interserve workers 'The Plum Tree in the Desert', concludes with these words:

"God is never harsh with us, he gently guides and leads, he knows what will happen when the visa is refused, and he puts us where he wants us. He loves his people and he has plans for us, even when the lights are dim and our strength is gone. Perhaps the more cracked we are, the more broken, and the more we weep, the more his light shines through us." (p.136)

It's no new thing for missionary endeavours to be restricted. The apostle Paul's plans to visit places were sometimes thwarted. However, God's plans and purposes are ultimately never thwarted.

Ireland has now become what is often referred to as a 'creative access' country. This invites creative thinking and fervent prayer. Is it possible that God might have in mind that some of the 'grey nomads' of wealthy Australia and New Zealand, particularly those with British or European citizenship from long ago, could move to Ireland for a year or two? There is much need for mature, godly, self-funded Christians to spend a year or two with small church plants, to get to know people in the local community and support missionary workers that are already serving there.

We certainly know it's God's plan for us to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field. It can be tempting to despair and give up on Ireland as a mission field. However, God could change the hearts and policies of the Immigration Department. He could also spur others with passport access to go. He has already

been raising up more and more Irish Christians to serve in local, gospel ministries. He could have in mind that we be part of supporting them financially.

Let's pray for the people that inhabit those green fields. While the fields may be partially closed, we can still pray that hearts would be opened to the hope of life in Jesus, and that God would raise up workers in his way and time to bring the message of that hope to the Irish.

PLEASE PRAY

Pray that God may still allow overseas gospel workers a pathway to ministry in Ireland. Pray for creative approaches to continue resourcing ministry in areas in Ireland which now seem closed. Pray for local Irish workers to remain strong in the gospel.

PORTUGAL TO AUSTRALIA AND BACK AGAIN!

It has been a joy for many of us to support Samuel Ferriera in his practical and theological training here in Australia, with the view to his return to Portugal. Samuel updates us on the plans for the coming year or so, including a return to Portugal with his soon to be wife, Emily.



**“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails.”
Proverbs 19:21**

When I came to Australia in 2016, the plan was to stay for one year to be trained for gospel ministry in Portugal. Yet, the Lord’s purpose prevailed and in his kindness he gave me the opportunity to study at Sydney Missionary and Bible College (SMBC), and also the opportunity to meet Emily. She and I will be marrying in January 2020! Emily is also studying at SMBC and has a heart for missions. God willing, we will be sent to Portugal once Emily finishes her studies.

I am in my final semester of Bible College and thankful that amidst the challenges, God has sustained me and grown me in my handling of Scripture and understanding of Him, myself and the world. For my final major project, I am investigating the relationship between prophecy and teaching in the Bible and its implications for women’s ministry roles today. I am excited about this topic, but have many more words to write and not much time remaining!

Next year, while Emily finishes her studies, I will be serving as a staff-worker with the Evangelical Union (EU), a Christian group of about 600 students at Sydney University. Emily has previously worked with the EU, and we are both very passionate about

ministry to university students. This will be a great opportunity to pastor, train and teach university students, putting into practice what I have been learning at Bible College, and developing skills that hopefully will help us in the ministry we will be doing Portugal. As I work with the EU, I desire to challenge the Christian students (who, by virtue of being a Christian in Sydney, are well-trained and resourced) to use their life to serve God in less gospel-reached and less gospel-resourced parts of the world, such as Portugal. When I visited Portugal earlier this year, I was confronted again by the need for trained gospel workers to disciple new generations of Christian leaders in Portugal.

I am deeply grateful for ECM, and those who partner with me prayerfully, emotionally and financially. I invite your partnership in this season of ministry with the EU. Your prayers and finances go beyond supporting me, and even beyond the university campus. God willing it will bless God’s church in Australia, Portugal and beyond.

PLEASE PRAY

Praise God for Samuel’s EU work next year and pray that he will be able to minister faithfully. Pray for financial support needed to do this ministry (around \$45,000)



Pray for...

IRELAND

Ireland is a land of gentle green fields, mountains and lakes - a Celtic Paradise on the western fringe of Europe. But Ireland is also a nation torn and divided in two by political and religious strife. Although the Catholic Church has dominated Irish life for centuries, society is becoming increasingly secular as the authority of the Catholic church wanes. Ireland is experiencing rapid and significant change in many areas as many people go there to live, work or seek asylum from other nations.



PRAYER POINTS

- Pray for Irish believers to reach out to culturally and spiritually diverse immigrants among them.
- Pray for the training and funding of more Irish missionaries and leaders by evangelical churches.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- We are looking for people to be involved in a church plant in the west of Ireland and help teach the gospel to children in the south east.

POPULATION

4.83M



167 births per day



93 net immigration per day



85 deaths per day

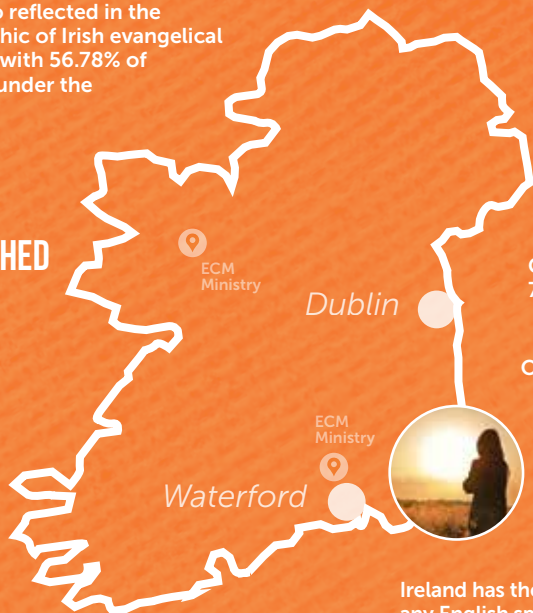
Ireland has one of the youngest populations in Europe: half is younger than 28 years old. This is also reflected in the demographic of Irish evangelical churches, with 56.78% of members under the age of 15.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Church has dominated much of Irish culture over the centuries, whether the Celtic Church of the early Middle Ages, or the Roman Catholic Church. Although 88% of the population still claims allegiance to the Roman Catholic faith, Ireland is becoming increasingly secular with church attendance dropped by half.

UNREACHED PEOPLE

46,000



CHRISTIAN AFFILIATION



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

Ireland has the lowest percentage of evangelicals in any English speaking country in the world.

GROWTH OF RELIGIONS

The fastest growing belief in Ireland is the Orthodox branch of Christianity, with 45,200 adherants in 2011 and 65,200 in 2016. The rise reflects the increase in migration to Ireland in recent years.

CHURCHES



Although there are many churches, Ireland has 72 towns with populations of more than 5000 that remain without any gospel-centered church.

BELIEFS IN IRELAND

Roman Catholic 78%

Believe in God 72%

While 78% of people stated that they were Catholic in the 2016 census, a Europol survey found that only 72% of people have belief in God.

ECM MINISTRY

There has been a significant work of the Holy Spirit over the past 30 years. Small evangelical churches have emerged throughout the country as people have come to Christ. At present ECM is involved in church planting initiatives in Waterford and Claremorris. In partnership with Calvary Mission, we are seeking to develop new teams to bring the gospel to the many remaining towns in Ireland with no Bible believing church.



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

Join us at our Ireland Prayer Evening on 17 February (see back cover).



PRAYER FUEL



RICHARD AND ALI MAEGRAITH GERMANY

After a tumultuous few months of settling back to Berlin we now feel like it's a real time of rest, despite the increases in our workload. It demonstrates how difficult it was when we had so much insecurity over the boys' schooling. Praise God that the boys are now all settled into school. Pray for the boys as they adjust to very long school days and are very often tired.

We are now a couple of months into leading 'Batik' church. Rich has worked really hard every week to preach in German, which requires a lot of preparation. But of course it is a tremendous blessing for him.

At 'Batik' church we are involved in training two young leaders in how to take bible studies, lead services and basically care for people. It's funny for us as we actually have very limited experience running a church ourselves and here we are training others, and in German! Pray for these two young leaders as they discern God's future plans for them.

Praise God for Andre, who recently turned up to 'Batik' and wanted to get baptised. Pray for this new believer to thrive and be established in the faith. Praise God too that Jonah, our second boy, wanted to get baptised too.

Praise God that Rich has made some great connections in the music scene, especially with a prominent musician who has been asking a lot about our church. Pray also for an older neighbour who has been visiting us more often, that we would have more significant conversations with him.



Photo: the Maegraith boys with Tim the intern

- Give thanks to God for the boys' schooling. Pray that they will have energy to learn well. Give thanks for Jonah's recent commitment to baptism.
- Pray for God's wisdom for Rich in his leadership and preaching at 'Batik' church and for good fruit from the training of other leaders.
- Give thanks for Andre's growing faith. Pray for Rich's musical friend, and the Maegraith's older neighbour to keep seeking God and come to faith in Christ.



PRAYER
FUEL

ANDREW AND KATE BLACKWELL

BULGARIA

Bulgaria has been in the international news in recent months. Jock Palfreeman being released on parole but detained in the country despite being given an order to leave. Then racism being displayed at the 2020 Soccer World Cup qualifier by Bulgarian fans against black English players. This is not how we would like to see this beautiful country come to the notice of the world but it does shine a light on some of the challenges here. Corruption is still evident despite European Union concerns and racism is prolific, especially towards the Roma (gypsy) people.

For generations, the Roma people have been told 'You are terrible. You are animals. You don't deserve to live. You are not worth anything.' In Bulgaria the Roma live on the

fringes of society. Their neighbourhoods usually start on the edge of Bulgarian villages – exactly where the bitumen, power and sewer supplies stop. 62% of Bulgarian Roma have no access to an indoor toilet, bath or shower.

Bulgaria's deputy prime minister will shortly table a report which apparently defines Roma as 'asocial Gypsies' - a term used by the Nazis. The report calls for limits on the number of children some Roma women can have, the introduction of compulsory "labour education schools" for Roma children, and forced work programmes for sections of the community.¹

We need your prayers for Bulgaria and for us in this situation.

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/20/bulgaria-sofia-racism-roma-everybody-hates-us-anti-gypsy-abuse>

- **Pray for the country of Bulgaria, that God would have mercy on the nation and that its people would learn to see and love one another as Christ does.**
- **Pray that the report to limit the Roma's freedoms does not become law.**
- **Pray for the Blackwells,, that God would mould them into His likeness so that they might be salt and light.**



PRAYER FUEL



JAMES AND CAROLYNN WEBB

SPAIN

Since June this year we have had our church gathering every second Sunday in a council building attached to the St Peter Catholic Chapel in our town, Zalla. Since the 15th century, people came to the chapel to be exorcised from demons and the "evil eye" by entering one door and out the other. This doesn't happen now, but locals continue to celebrate this occult past with fair days and reenactments. Where we meet is the old verger's house which is now owned by the council.

Knowing the history of this place, we are very conscious of the spiritual battle. However God has opened the way for us to meet here in a public place, to worship him, read his word and pray together. It's a joy and a privilege. As Matthew 18:20 says, "where two or three gather in my name there I am with them."

Our prayer is that local people will come to meet with us to read the Bible on Sundays in Zalla. Right now it is just us, ECM teammates the Aldanas, and some believers from the mother church in Bilbao. Please pray that we will be able to be salt and light for Jesus in a dark place. Pray that we might be faithful and persevering in building friendships, showing love to others and having opportunities to share our hope in Jesus with those around us.



Photo: the small church gathering in Zalla

- Give thanks for a place for the church to gather in Zalla. Give thanks that God's power is greater than the powers of darkness.
- Pray for the ministry of the church: that it will be a light to the community around them.
- Pray for the Webbs, the Aldanas and other nearby believers, to persevere in building friendships and have opportunities to share Jesus.



— PARTNERING WITH —

GOD'S POWERFUL WORK

in Malta

THE BORGS

Mark & Gina Borg and family have been serving on the Island of Malta for two years. There is a desperate need for gospel workers, as only 0.2% of the population self-identity as Bible believers. The Borgs have been mightily used by God in relational evangelism, discipleship and music ministry. Here's a little sample of how God is using them:

Gina writes: "This year I've met to read the Bible and pray with a number of ladies. The most interested lady I have met with weekly, with her baby and toddler. Her passion to love God, as revealed biblically in the gospel, led her to share her testimony publicly at church. She explained how looking into the Bible allowed her to have an assurance of salvation, and freedom from the power of sin in her life. The insight into God's eternal plan for her gave her courage to face some battles with anxiety over death. Jesus is teaching her to walk with him daily. She's had God conversations in her family and workplace, with a few requests for Bibles, as she's explained the transformational work of God in her life."

THE NEED

Just recently the Borgs' support has fallen well behind, so that they need to raise \$3,000 a month to continue their ministry. Would you be able to help? Your partnership with the Borgs will play an important part in assisting this couple continue to shine the light of the gospel in Malta.

For details of how you can help, go to the inside back page or our website ecmaustralia.org/borgs and make your gift today. Thank you!

WHAT'S ON MATT'S MIND?

Matt George
ECM Director – Australia & NZ



VISION TOGETHER?

Have you ever wondered why missionary organisations don't work more closely together? I have. In Australia, there are actually a lot of evangelical mission organisations that work, together with churches, to send and support overseas missionaries. You've probably heard of the bigger ones, such as CMS, Pioneers, SIM and OMF, to mention just a few.

Given our unique contribution and individual approaches as agencies, we also have so much in common in our commitment to Christ's global mission and the increasing challenge to mobilise the current generations of churches and Australian Christians for mission. We have great capacity to enrich each other's sense of vision, learn from each other's strengths, and where possible, share information, resources and training to minimise costs and maximise effectiveness in missions.

I am now in my third year as ECM National Director. I can see how easy it is to become immersed in serving just the one missionary agency and so miss out on the great potential

that wider fellowship offers. So I give thanks for the work of 'Missions Interlink Australia' which exists as an umbrella organisation to network the different missionary agencies and churches together for God's greater glory in global missions. They provide a host of training and networking opportunities, as well as helping us comply with external standards and best practice as mission organisations.

Through Missions Interlink, I was able to facilitate a National Mission Agency Leaders Think Tank in September, with a view to establishing a greater sense of vision and mission together. There were ten of us gathered in Katoomba. For me, it was great to be able to meet with the Australian leaders of SIM, WEC, Wycliffe, AIM, Interserve, GNR and OMF (as well as others). Even given our diversity, I thought we had a very productive discussion and it was evident the unity we have in Jesus and his mission.

Praise God we were able to articulate a common vision, mission and identify areas in which we will seek to work more closely together:

Vision: For the nations to know and love Jesus in partnership with the church.

Mission: To work on projects that promote global missions across Australia.

We also identified 5 key areas for working together:

- To continue close teamwork at 'Reach Out' and other mission conferences and events.
- To continue to work together on the 'Missions Seek' website, www.missionseek.com.au, a common platform for promoting needs and opportunities to serve.
- To work together on global missions podcasts and videos.
- To prioritise working on mission internships and apprenticeships together, through sharing resources, expertise and trainers.
- To create more professional networks to share expertise and encourage one another.

We ask for your prayers as we continue to work in partnership for God's glory.

QUICK SNIPPETS

Find out what God is doing in Europe!

■ New 'Missions' MTS Program

Many of you have been active supporters of **Simon & Danielle Ball**, who have recently returned to Australia permanently. While in Ireland, Simon mentored and disciplined Australian short-term workers, intentionally training them in cross-cultural ministry using the "MTS" model. "MTS" (Ministry Training Strategy) is a two-year ministry apprenticeship or traineeship that many young adults are encouraged to do to equip themselves for gospel ministry and determine their suitability for vocational ministry.

ECM and Pioneers are now entering into a partnership together with MTS to create a cross-cultural 'missions' version of MTS. In this program, trainees would also learn cross-cultural ministry principles and spend a significant portion of their apprenticeship in an overseas location under an MTS approved trainer. Simon has agreed to take on the coordination role of what we are calling "Missions MTS", starting January 2020. His role will involve the development of key aspects of the program, such as a missions curriculum, mentorship and quality trainers both in Australia and overseas. We look forward to Simon joining the ECM Australia staff team and seeing how God uses this traineeship to raise up more workers for the Harvest.

■ Update on Vladimir Kostorny

Vladimir Kostorny is moving to the USA with his wife and family in a month or so, to work at the home office of Eurasia Partners. Vlad will continue in partnership with ECM as he does online coaching of church-planters across Eurasia and Eastern Europe.



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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**

MONDAY 16 DECEMBER: ECM CHRISTMAS PARTY

Location: ECM Centre,
15 Malvern Ave, Croydon
Time: 6.30–8pm for dinner

Come and join us as we celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus and give thanks for the fruit of ECM ministry throughout the year. All welcome!

Suggested donation \$5 per individual, \$10 per family



MONDAY 17 FEBRUARY: IRELAND EVENING

Location: ECM Centre,
15 Malvern Ave, Croydon
Time: 6.00–7.30pm

Join us for a simple dinner and prayer for Ireland. Hear from those who have lived and worked in Ireland. We'll also be praying for Karen Laird and her ministry in Waterford. Join us as we pray that missionary visa restrictions might be lifted, and for the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into the green fields of Ireland.

IRELAND PRAYER + DINNER EVENING

17 FEBRUARY 2020