

JUNE 2023

Vision

FOR EUROPE

THE GOSPEL IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND



EUROPEAN
MISSION
FELLOWSHIP



We are a fellowship of churches and individuals networking together to support gospel workers in 18 countries across Europe. We train, send and support both national and cross cultural leaders so that local churches can be planted, pastored and multiplied.

Never has there been a greater need for churches that are God centred, Gospel driven, theologically clear, culturally connected and pastorally engaged.

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If ever there was a mission-field on our (ie the UK's) doorstep, it's the Republic of Ireland, the least-evangelised majority English-speaking country in the world. What's our excuse for not doing more to support gospel work in Ireland?

('Saint') Patrick was a real person, a real Christian, and a real missionary! 1,600 years later, we need more Patricks!

A lot has happened in Ireland in the last 40 years: the influence of the Catholic Church has plummeted; abortion, homosexuality (etc.), and even euthanasia have become acceptable, and the first two legalised, reflecting the very opposite of the Christian view of birth, marriage, and death.

But during those same 40 years, the number of evangelical churches has more than doubled! More Irish people (as well as people from all over the world) are hearing the gospel, believing it, being saved, and becoming real followers of Jesus – people like Molly, whose story you can read in these pages.

But, with an evangelical presence of still only around 1%, Ireland desperately needs more faithful gospel workers like EMF's own Eugen Peters – more evangelists, more disciple-makers, more church planters, and more pastors.

We also pay tribute to a man who, though born in England, became about as Irish as they come, and faithfully served the Lord and the cause of the gospel in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland: our dear brother Michael Grant.

All the above, plus you get to meet our three newest missionary couples and to read our latest news.

Every blessing
Andrew Birch



FINANCIAL POSITION

31 MARCH 2023

We are grateful to all of those who have donated to the Mission in the course of the year.

Total Income:
£157,159 (not inc.
legacies of £2,000)

Total Expenditure:
£211,263

YTD Deficit:
£54,104



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WAYS TO GIVE TO US:

Online	Stewardship: www.stewardship.org.uk CAF: www.cafonline.org
Direct	Account Number: 10340073 Sort code: 20-92-54 IBAN - GB62 BARC20925410340073 Swift Code (BIN) - BARC GB22 Reference: General Fund or project or designate to a specific missionary or country
Post	Cheques payable to 'European Missionary Fellowship' and sent to the address on the previous page

Donations in Northern Ireland

Direct	Account Number: 30034509 Sort code: 95-04-27 Reference: General Fund or designate to a specific missionary or country
Post	Cheques payable to 'European Missionary Fellowship' and sent to Phil Dunn, 23 Millgrange, Ballymoney, Co. Antrim, BT53 7QB

Donations in Australia

c/o Ian Cameron, or to Commonwealth Bank
Account number: 10101262 Sort code: 06-41-58

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NEWS

MISSION UPDATE

The Mission decided not to extend the support of **Joonas and Deborah Laajanen** in Finland after their initial period of one year, mainly because of the absence of a church or presbytery behind the work in Lahti. Please continue to pray for Joonas and Deborah (and baby Habakkuk!).

Manuel and Pauline Redondo are back in London. Although there were no major problems, things in Barcelona didn't work out the way we had hoped, leading to an amicable conclusion to their time there. Pauline is working, and Manuel is looking for work. Please pray for them and little Abigail.

After many years of service in Italy, in April **Michael and Mary Steedman** retired from the work and have returned to Inverness, which is Mary's hometown, but will still be active in the Lord's service.

UKRAINE APPEAL

Please pray that the remaining money will be spent wisely as the need is still great.

NEW EMF MISSIONARIES

We are pleased to welcome new missionaries:



Spain
Evair & Fiona Córdova
(Alcázar de San Juan)

STAFF UPDATE

In April Jonathan Jeffreys left to get married to Esther Brooks and move to Germany.

We welcome new members of staff:

- **Mandy Cook** – Admin Assistant
- **Alison Woodrow** – Engagement Support Lead
- **Sarah Bassett** – Communications Lead

MISSIONARY MAP



An A1 size poster of EMF missionaries is still available. Please contact the Office if you would like one.

Donations to our Ukraine appeal as of April 2023:

Received: £1,653,043
Remaining: £133,913

Bibles and Blankets:

Received: £155,597
Remaining: £30,986

MARY OF THE BIBLE, MARY OF THE CHURCH

Mary was a young Jewish woman who was chosen by God to supernaturally conceive and give birth to Jesus, thus becoming part of the way in which the Son of God became a man. She was also a member of the first community of men and women who followed Jesus. Her role was to be at the service of her Son, her Saviour and Lord. However, for Roman Catholics (and to a certain extent for Eastern Orthodox) Mary deeply shapes their entire life. She is prayed to and venerated, surrounded by a vast array of 'Marian' devotions, such as rosaries, processions, pilgrimages. The titles with which she is referred to (Heavenly Queen, Mediatrix, Advocate) resemble those ascribed to her son, Jesus Christ.



ROMAN CATHOLIC MARIOLOGY IS A POWERFUL TOOL TO SHAPE ONE'S OWN IMAGINATION IN TERMS OF THE PERVASIVE PRESENCE AND AGENCY OF MARY IN WHATEVER THE TRIUNE GOD IS AND DOES. THIS IS TOTALLY CONTRARY TO THE GOSPEL... THERE IS NO MEDIATOR APART FROM CHRIST FOR OUR SALVATION AND PRAYERS.



an idealised Mary. Some apocryphal (literally 'obscure') gospels (eg *The Protoevangelium of James*) elaborated on traditions that tried to embellish the gospel story at the expense of its authenticity.

Besides the influence of these writings, the spiritual framework that gave us Mariology was generated by popular piety. Liturgies centered on Mary, prayers addressed to her, devotions to honour her – this is the religious milieu of the Mariological crescendo. It was through the practice of devotional prayer that Mary was transformed from being a model of faith to becoming an object-subject of faith addressed in prayer and praised in the context of Christian worship.

Against this background, the Council of Ephesus (431AD) gave Mary the title 'mother of God'. The 'motherhood' of Mary that first related to Jesus Christ was extended to her motherhood of other areas – mother of the church and mother of the human race.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church goes as far as to say, 'The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is intrinsic to Christian worship' (section 971). To call devotion to Mary 'intrinsic' means there can be no proper worship without devotion to her. It also implies that when dealing with Marian devotion,

The process through which Mary became so venerated was long and not linear. It accumulated different viewpoints, devotions, and doctrinal formulations that eventually led to a body of beliefs and practices centered on Mary but beyond biblical boundaries. The real, biblical Mary became

Mariology, as it stands, needs to go through a process of radically biblical deconstruction if it wants to become a biblically defined and viable Christian option.

one touches a central nerve of the whole of Catholic spirituality. It's not something that can be dealt with independently.

Instead of inculcating salvation history as the Bible tells it, Roman Catholic Mariology is a powerful tool to shape one's own imagination in terms of the pervasive presence and agency of Mary in whatever the Triune God is and does. This is totally contrary to the gospel whereby all that is said in the Scriptures needs to be seen in the light of Jesus Christ (Luke 24:27) and that there is no mediator apart from Christ for our salvation and prayers (1 Timothy 2:5).

Apart from shaping the life of prayer and the overall spiritual understanding of salvation history for Catholics, Mariology is also a determining factor for the arrangement of worship in its spatial dimension. Thousands of church buildings around the world are dedicated to Mary, thus forging the minds and hearts of millions of people. The strong Marian emphasis of Roman Catholicism has also been enriched by alleged apparitions of Mary throughout the centuries. Rather than promoting a Bible-based, Christ-centered faith, all these messages have reinforced Marian practices and venerations.

In all its theological force and devotional ramifications, Mariology is an inescapable, all-embracing, and fundamental tenet of Roman Catholic theology and practice. For all Bible-believing Christians, Mariology is a big source of puzzlement. They love Mary, but they cannot come to terms with what happened to the memory of the young lady called by God the Father to be the bearer of the person of the Lord Jesus. They don't see how the biblical Mary can be reconciled with the hypertrophic Mary of subsequent Mariology. Its development seems to respond to rules and criteria that go way beyond what is written in the Bible.

Mariology, as it stands, needs to go through a process of radically biblical deconstruction if it wants to become a biblically defined and viable Christian option. All the stratified accumulation of Marian suggestions, expansions, and developments should go through the healthy refinement of clear biblical teaching in order to be given Scriptural shape. Pointing our attention to the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ – this was Mary's way.



Leonardo de Chirico is pastor of the church 'Breccia di Roma', is a well-known conference speaker, and for his PhD wrote *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism*.



ONE OF THE LEAST-REACHED NATIONS IN EUROPE

'I came to the people of Ireland to preach the Gospel ... I am prepared to give my life without hesitation and most gladly for his name.'

Patrick, Missionary to Ireland 440AD

Patrick, Missionary to Ireland 440AD Patrick's ministry led to the conversion of thousands to Christianity, including the sons and daughters of Irish Kings. The fruit of his preaching remained for generations through established churches, trained ministers, and foreign missionaries sent to Europe. However, those early years never took root, and today the needs are just as pressing. For historical and political reasons, Northern Ireland has a rich and strong evangelical heritage. The same cannot be said for the Republic of Ireland; it remains the least-reached English-speaking nation in the world. Ireland is among the least-reached nations in Europe, with one of the lowest evangelical populations: 0.5%. Ireland needs more Patricks.



0.5%

IRELAND IS THE LEAST-REACHED
NATION IN EUROPE, WITH ONE
OF THE LOWEST EVANGELICAL
POPULATIONS



Despite the great need, there is great encouragement and church growth. Faithful witness over many years means there are over 240 evangelical churches in the Republic/south of Ireland with an average attendance of eighty. Many of those churches would have less than thirty in attendance, but they are a light in many places where there is no other gospel witness.

Our strategy is simple: Local churches proclaiming Christ to plant new churches. To do this we need long-term partnerships with supporting churches who are committed to pray, give, and encourage over the long term.

Perseverance for the long haul

Partnerships and efforts in Irish church planting require a spirit of perseverance.



Members of these churches on the ground, the full-time workers and the partners in other places, need to face the task with a long-term view. It is increasingly obvious in rural and urban settings alike that church planting in Ireland is a 20 to 25-year project, rather than a two to five-year one.

The reality is that the slow work has great advantages, even if we would crave a greater openness generally to the gospel.

At the end of the day, it is slow work because we seek to win 'unreached' people. It's not about growing churches from transfer growth. For sure, we take joy as believers grow in their walk with God as they serve, but we want the unreached to be reached.

Isn't this the story of mission? A burden for those who 'have no idea' of the gospel and have never heard! A heart for future generations of Irish ... not just this generation.

Ireland today is a place where people are more open to some degree than previously, but certainly they still seem to be a people 'who have no idea' about the Bible, and the message of Jesus. 'Do you celebrate Christmas in your religion?', we were asked recently. Evangelical churches are still largely misunderstood or treated with great suspicion.

Pray for local leaders!

Please pray for local Irish leadership to lead the churches in these days. There is a great increase in young Irish leaders leading the churches, and this brings hope that we can imagine a future where the Irish will hear the gospel communicated, and see it lived, with a local flavour.

This is such a change from the traditional approach of Irish churches being led by missionaries supported from elsewhere, in a manner that encouraged suspicion of things that are 'foreign'.

Pray for help!

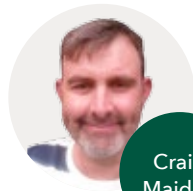
In the past 20 years the most successful workers to come from abroad have been those that have

come to work alongside and 'under' the local Irish leadership. With no other agenda but to encourage, to learn and to be a support, they often find that a relational and long-term approach to ministry leads to them being greatly appreciated.

In these years another means of support is simply for churches abroad to partner with local Irish congregations, to be of mutual support. There is no question that support for Irish ministry is hugely appreciated, but likewise the vision of local Irish leaders when they share about Irish gospel outreach proves often to be very encouraging and challenging for churches in other places.



Jonny Grant



Craig Maiden

Jonny Grant is pastor of Carrigaline Baptist Church and Craig Maiden at Kinsale Baptist Church.



A NEEDED MISSION FIELD

What I hope to do in this article is to give you an insight into the spiritual state of the Republic of Ireland, in the hope that those who feel called to missionary service might consider this land. I also hope to use this article to encourage concerted prayer for our very gospel-needy country.



When a lot of people think of Ireland, they automatically associate it with Catholicism and, given the country's history, this is quite understandable, but the Ireland of today is very much a post-Catholic country. In fact, Ireland has regrettably become one of the most so-called 'progressive' countries in Europe. This reality was demonstrated by the results of two recent referendums. The same-sex marriage referendum of 2015 was passed by a 62% majority, and the abortion referendum of 2018 was passed by a majority of 66%, which provided for a very liberal abortion regime. In both these referendums, the Catholic Church sought a 'no' vote, but the majority of its membership ignored their guidance. Therefore, it is fair to say that the Catholic church in Ireland has lost its moral authority. While the majority still identify as Catholics, one commentator nonetheless described present-day Catholics as those who are 'Catholic without Catholicism'.

This loss of Catholic authority in Ireland can be traced to three factors:

1. The Church's moral authority, which had so profoundly shaped the self-consciousness of the country, was shattered by a devastating sequence of seemingly never-ending scandals.

2. The relentless advance of materialistic and atheistic philosophy in the country. The Irish experience of secularisation, in comparison with the rest of Europe, happened at a pace that sociologists described as utterly phenomenal.
3. The effects of a little-known decision of the Second Vatican Council also had a profound effect on Catholicism, an effect that they had not expected. Before Vatican Two, the battle cry of Catholicism was 'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus' meaning 'outside the church, there is no salvation'. But after Vatican Two this exclusivity was abandoned, giving way instead to a very radical doctrine of inclusivism. This new doctrine saw the inclusion of Protestants (now to be regarded as separated brethren), Jews, Muslims, Hindus and even atheists. Pope Francis recently declared, 'that all people, not just Catholics, are redeemed through Jesus, even atheists.' In this, he was reflecting fully the teachings of Vatican Two. The new doctrine could be summarised in these well-known words 'All roads lead to God', and once it filtered down into the mind of the average Catholic, this new teaching had a deep impact, because it meant that Catholicism was no longer necessary for salvation.

One major indicator of the effects of this loss of authority by the Catholic Church can be seen in the figures for the weekly attendance at Mass. In its heyday, back in the '60s and '70s over 95% of Irish



OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCHES
IN IRELAND WERE FORMED IN
THE LAST 40 YEARS.



Catholics attended Mass weekly; that figure today is around 30%.¹ A survey published in March 2023 revealed that 41% of Catholics who went to Mass regularly before Covid no longer do so today, so the 30% figure overstates the attendance.² To understand fully the significance of these figures, one needs to keep in mind that weekly attendance is required by Catholic Church law.

For the rest of this article, I would like to briefly sketch the state of evangelicalism. Some 59% of the evangelical churches in Ireland were formed in the last 40 years, so we have much to be thankful for. Nonetheless, there are still 130 towns with a population of 5000 and above with no evangelical witness of any sort. Also, the percentage of the population who attend an evangelical church is less than 1%.³ This 1% figure is significant, because it has been reckoned that a country needs to be above 2% before it can produce sufficient leadership to meet its needs. So, Ireland will stand in need of missionaries for some time to come.

Conclusion

Please pray. Ireland needs concerted prayer. So, I would appeal that you consider praying regularly for Ireland.

Ireland needs missionaries. If you feel the Lord calling you to gospel work, please do give prayerful consideration to the Republic of Ireland. If you are a citizen of either Britain or the EEA⁴, gaining a visa is straightforward. If you do not belong to either Britain or an EEA country, gaining a visa can be a bit difficult but we can assist.

Finally, maybe you are not called to full-time ministry, but are in a position to relocate to Ireland because you are retired or because of the nature of your work. By joining and actively supporting a local church and living out the Gospel in your daily life you would become a major source of encouragement in a church plant.

Paudge
Mulvihill



Paudge is a pastor at Calvary Church, Westport and Secretary for Aontas, an association of evangelical churches in Ireland.

¹ Taken from an article by Patsy McGarry in the Irish Times Saturday, 11 August 2018

² www.independent.ie/irish-news/mass-exodus-over-41pc-of-worshippers-fail-to-return-to-church-after-covid-survey-shows-42404299.html

³ These figures come from research carried out by Aontas, an association of evangelical churches in Ireland (www.aontas.ie)

⁴ The EEA includes all of the EU, together with Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

TODAY'S IRELAND

Ireland is a totally different country to what it was a mere 30 or 40 Years ago. In the words of the poet W B Yeats, 'All changed, changed utterly: A terrible beauty is born.'



Almost every large town across Ireland has at least one evangelical church in it. This was not the case thirty years ago.



It is hard to imagine what has happened over the past thirty or so years – the power of the Roman Catholic Church has all but vanished! The constant-dripping in the media of another sexual abuse case by the Church, and the scale of it has shattered the faith of the majority of Roman Catholic people. Added to which, the Catholic authorities used legal power to try and keep some sufferers in lifelong silence. A government was brought down by that. This also led to the stepping-down of a cardinal from his position. In 1972 weekly Mass attendance was 91%, dropping to 30% in 2011. In 2016 more than one-third of the capital city, along with Galway, were identifying as non-Catholic.



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The collapse of the Church was influenced not just by the scandals, but also the availability of outside media from our neighbouring country and the USA. These avenues of information made the people open to thinking differently to the national narrative. The result of these forces was: Ireland became the first country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage through a population referendum; abortion was legalised, and, at present, the Irish constitution is being reworked so that the definition of the family and the role of women in the home will change too. We have a gay Prime Minister, who is in a relationship, leading the country. Secularism has swept the state.

When John Paul II visited Ireland in 1979, over 1.5 million people came out to see him. Forward to 2018, when Pope Francis visited less than one-tenth of the previous attendance came out to see him.

Economically, the country has almost full employment, but it also has an enormous housing crisis.

Alongside that we have thousands of refugees from Ukraine and more from Africa seeking asylum and refuge, the young adult population of the nation are unable

to find housing. Yes, Ireland has changed beyond recognition these past thirty or so years.

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The evangelical landscape has also changed, but for the better! With the influx of different nationalities, believers have also come. There are numerous new churches all around the country: Nigerian churches, Chinese churches, Filipino churches, Romanian churches, and many others. These churches can, under God, change the spirit of the land. We know what the Lord said to Abraham as the latter was pleading for Sodom and Gomorrah. Basically, the church being salt and light are still, respectively, a preservative and the source of light for anyone to see and discover.

The evangelical percentage of the country is less than 1%, but the growth of the church is increasing ever-so-slightly year on year. Yes, we are the least-evangelised English-speaking country in the world and, yes, the government policy to missionaries has become more difficult, yet almost every large town across Ireland has at least one evangelical church in it. This was not the case thirty years ago!

There is the issue of Northern Ireland and how that might play out in coming months (years) with regard to a united Ireland. I know that there are many who are keen on a united Ireland in the South, but there are many who live in the North who are not as keen.

Whatever happens, there is a large Protestant community that under God has an impact for good in their respective places. If the Lord were to quicken the church across the country, who knows what might happen!

As it is becoming difficult for missionaries to come and work in Ireland, maybe IT specialists and other professionals might consider working in the Republic, supporting the church and witnessing for Jesus. That would be one way of spreading the good news.

When John Wesley was criticised for the amount of time he spent travelling and preaching in Ireland, he replied, 'Have patience and Ireland will repay you.' It did. Oh, for such days again!

Matthew
Brennan



Matthew Brennan is Irish by birth and background. He is married to Barbara, and they have two adult sons. He has been ministering in Clonmel in an independent Baptist Church for the last 37 years.

'OUR MAN IN IRELAND'

AN INTERVIEW WITH EUGEN PETERS



Wendy: How long have you been in the Republic of Ireland?

Eugen: My wife, Claire, is Irish; after our marriage in September 2012 I joined her here and worked in the Republic of Ireland, firstly, as local directors with Child Evangelism Fellowship in Donegal for eight years. For the last three years we have been involved with EMF and helping at Grace Community Church outside Roscommon town.



ROSCOMMON
TOWN



Wendy: Does your family enjoy living in Roscommon?

Eugen: The move from Donegal wasn't easy, especially for Claire and our children, but we have settled in and have much to be thankful for.

Wendy: As a non-Irish person yourself, what have you done to integrate into Irish life and culture?

Eugen: From the first day I arrived in Ireland, I was more or less forced to integrate into the way of thinking and

living of the locals because of the nature of the ministry we were involved in. Also, as I have moved around a lot in my life, God had prepared me for moving and adapting to new settings.

Wendy: You work in Roscommon. Where do we find it on a map?

Eugen: Roscommon, the county town, is the largest in County Roscommon. It is in the middle of Ireland, above Athlone. The county has an overall population of 69,995 and the biggest town has around 6,000 people. Our church is located in a small rural village called Ballymurray, just outside Roscommon town and we live outside that, in a neighbouring village.

Wendy: Describe the area you work within.

Eugen: Ireland in general is very rural; wherever you go, you will see sheep, cows and fields, so in that context Roscommon is no different. Generally, the people are down to earth, hardworking and religious people. The majority living in the county would be religious in one way or another, and over half would attend Catholic mass weekly, but there are, of course, a mixture of beliefs and world views.

God had prepared me for moving and adapting to new settings.

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Wendy: How would you say evangelism in Roscommon is different from evangelism in Dublin?

Eugen: Dublin and Roscommon are two different worlds, not only culturally, but also in the accents and world views. In the context of sharing the gospel with people, Roscommon people would be more church-going and traditional, whereas Dublin would be more secular.

Wendy: How many people attend your church? Is it made up of all ages?

Eugen: Including all the children and the regular visitors, we have around 50 people at Grace Community Church on a Sunday.

Wendy: Thinking about people in your church who've come to faith, how did that happen?

Eugen: God has millions of ways of drawing and saving his elect, and we are amazed at how he does it. Thinking about some of the newest folks to come to our church, the Internet has played a huge role. Some of the young adults who came to faith received a Bible handed to them by someone and started to read it, but then very quickly



began to research things online; by the grace of God, they ended up on websites where the gospel has been explained understandably. Eventually God showed them their need of salvation, and after saving them, he revealed to them the need to find a church; then after a while they came to Grace Community Church.

Wendy: You have had some training days. Could you tell us more about these and why you think this kind of training is important?

Eugen: Discipling and training form part of our calling as believers. It is a command by Christ to go and make disciples; a part of that is to help the person to develop their God-given responsibility and gifts in the Kingdom of God. In that context, training in every area of church life and service is vital. So, there's been some training of our own leaders and people, and recently we have offered instruction in bigger training events for other believers to join us. We have had regular training for the children's club leaders, as well as a more focussed series on teaching Bible lessons to children effectively. We opened these up to people from other fellowships, and some folks from another church came along and benefitted too. I am also involved in discipling and training the young people at the youth group. Andrew Curry coming in and doing a day conference on living as disciples by making disciples was a huge encouragement to those who visited from various churches in the wider area.

COMPELLED BY THE LOVE OF CHRIST

It was twenty-five years ago that I first came to live and work in Ireland, in the counties of Tipperary and Cork. Now I live and work in Dublin City Centre. At university I had been thrilled to see fellow students from a Roman Catholic background come to personal saving faith in Jesus Christ. As a CU leader I had the opportunity to get to know my counterparts in leadership from the

Universities in Dublin and Cork. Their fresh and vibrant faith was compelling, and God quietly but firmly planted in my heart that this was a place and ministry I should pursue.

The Apostle Paul says, 'For Christ's love compels us (2 Corinthians 5:14) as it did God, 'for God so loved the world' (John 3:16), and it is important that our motive for evangelism is rooted in God's love for us and our love for others.

Christ's love compels us, convinced of the truth of the gospel, which gives us a confidence that enables us to share the love of Christ with others.



The second truth that motivates is the wonder of truth. Jesus is the truth, and again this idea captivated me early on. If you are convinced of a truth then you can literally stand firm on that truth. So, the Apostle says, 'we are convinced that one died for all' (2 Corinthians 5:14), and therefore it is truth that motivates us to proclaim the gospel: the truth of the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we endeavour to speak the truth in love to all. This can happen in every level of life and church activity, in the teaching that occurs week by week in the Sunday service, and in one-to-ones with those we know.

In Tipperary and Cork, we took as many opportunities as possible to run Bible studies, and to provide topical responses to issues of the day in community venues such as hotels, pubs or community centres. We never had huge numbers, but these were the main opportunities we had of engaging meaningfully with those whom God was drawing, and it was from these events that some came by the power of the Holy Spirit to conviction and salvation. It is important to note that this was simply the beginning of their engagement with the Scriptures, as Jesus' final command is that we make disciples.

In provincial Ireland we did not encounter much hostility and opposition, as many could be described as God-fearing. However, this is not the case today, particularly in the larger towns and cities. Christians are seen as weird, homophobic and irrelevant, and there is much hostility to us for many reasons, but that does not alter the need and motivation of love and

speaking the truth. People and communities need to see our love and they need to experience the truth of what we believe and proclaim, and so meeting needs and proclamation are necessary.

Where I think we have done this best in Dublin is in our evangelism to the international student population around our church. They have a need to practise the English language, a need for a safe place to socialise, and a need for food and fun. In recognition of those needs, and seeking to meet them, we set up a café and invited them to eat, talk, and play games, and we sought to inform them about the society they have come to live in. As part of this we offer a Bible study and introduce them to the person of the Lord Jesus. The success of this is seen in the numbers attending, in the transition to coming to church, and, in some cases, in people coming to faith in Christ.

A helpful book in thinking through this type of evangelism through is Timothy Keller's *Ministries of Mercy*.

Christ's love compels us, convinced of the truth of the gospel, which gives us a confidence that enables us to share the love of Christ with others; to that end we pray and work for the glory of God.



Rev Sam Mawhinney

Minister of
Adelaide Road
Presbyterian
Church

I AM HIS AND HE IS MINE!



THE DOHERTY FAMILY

I grew up in a little village in County Tipperary, the youngest of eight children from a Catholic background. As the result of a house fire two days before my 1st birthday and my mother's poor mental health, I was sent to live with my aunt until I was nine years old. As a child, I felt I didn't really belong, I didn't understand why I wasn't living with my family, and I was also aware that I wasn't accepted as part of my aunt's family. When I was nine, my aunt, struggling with her own personal issues, packed a black bin bag full of clothes, loaded me into her car, dropped me off at my parents' gate and drove off. I waited for her to return but she didn't.

As a child, I found great comfort in knowing that I was loved by God and believed that he was always with me. My relationship with God was influenced by my religious upbringing, I would recite repetitive prayers and thought of him as a passive being in the sky that watched over me but kept his distance until he called me home to heaven someday.

When I grew older, I desperately sought belonging and acceptance from people; I wanted to be liked. I went from relationship to relationship and moved from house to house, ironically living out of black bin bags for many years. One Saturday when I was 22 years old, after many failed relationships and house moves, I came to the realisation that I needed God in my life; I tried to find him where I thought he was. I visited church buildings, spoke with some religious leaders, but I couldn't find him!

Out of boredom, I asked my brother-in-law if I could accompany him to a home Bible study he had started to attend. He very enthusiastically brought me along and I observed the jolly-looking folk who sat reading their Bibles. The gospel was shared, and I listened intently. I took a Bible and read it from cover to cover, not knowing or understanding much, but I found God through those pages and began to see that he wasn't a distant being in the sky; he was very much present and wanted to have an intimate personal relationship with me. It was my sin that had separated me from his love. I didn't know that God had a name, it was Jesus Christ!

I never experienced love, acceptance, or peace until I came to Christ for forgiveness. My eyes were physically opened, and I was in awe of God's beautiful creation. My sister stated, 'you'd think you were living in a padded cell all your life, going on about the birds, the trees, and the sky!' I was

I never experienced love,
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living in darkness all of my life as a result of my sin. I wanted to tell everyone of this great encounter with Christ. As you can imagine, not many were as enthusiastic as I was; I lost all of my friends who now thought of me as a little strange. A year later, I ended up marrying the man who shared the gospel with me; after ten years the Lord blessed us with our daughter Eliza Jane (5) and two years later with our son Joel (3).

Instead of venturing into new and exciting pastures as a Christian, the Lord brought me back to the people and places where I had experienced the most pain and rejection. He was now with me as I sought forgiveness and forgave those who had hurt me. I returned to college, and I work with Restorative Justice, with offenders and victims. The Lord enabled us to build our own beautiful home in the little village I was brought up in. I take my children to visit my mother and my aunt regularly, and I am so thankful for the ordinary mundane things of life, which is where God wants me to be, to grow and to serve him in everyday ordinary ways like cleaning dirty noses and washing the dishes, and I genuinely wouldn't trade it for the world. I am so blessed and thankful that I am his and he is mine.

Molly
Doherty



MICHAEL GRANT

APPRECIATION

Michael was born in England but spent most of his life in Ireland, and he and his wife Rosemary most definitely considered themselves to be Irish. After his conversion in the 1960's, Michael soon felt called into the work of the Christian ministry, and in 1969 he went to study in the EMF School of Biblical Studies in Watford. (Daniel Webber, later to become EMF director, was also at Watford at that time, and I am indebted to him for some of the details about Michael's life in his earlier years.) Michael and Rosemary were already married, with 2 young children, in those Watford days, and Daniel remembers the kindness of Rosemary in supplying the 'live-in' students with homemade cakes which the single students appreciated very much, and many lifelong friendships were formed then.

Michael and Rosemary came to Ireland in 1972 when Michael became pastor of the Baptist church in Waterford, as part of the EMF family. This church had a long history going back to the 17th century, but at that time it had only three members.

Michael had a lovely, quiet gentle personality, and he loved the gospel and the reformed faith. He loved the Lord, and he spent most of his life preaching the gospel and seeking to point people to Jesus.

However, Michael and Rosemary loved the people of Waterford and befriended many, while Michael preached faithfully in the church. They still had contact in recent years with people from Waterford who were blessed by their ministry there. As well as his preaching, Michael had a gift for personal evangelism, and Daniel recalls one time years later when Michael winsomely, and naturally, even took the opportunity to witness to a waitress in a restaurant when they were out for a meal.

In 1997 the Grants moved north when Michael took up the position of EMF representative in Northern Ireland (although this move was not without some heart-searching), and that is when I came to know him in my role for a number of years as chairman of the Northern Ireland EMF Council, and a member of EMF's Executive Committee. During his 11 years as Northern Ireland representative Michael helped raise awareness of EMF in many churches, and he left a support base in the North on a solid footing, which was a great help



to his successor, Tom McKendry. In 2007, Michael retired, and he and Rosemary moved back down south to live in County Cork, nearer to their family.

Michael had a lovely, quiet, gentle personality, and he loved the Gospel and the reformed faith. But, more especially, he loved the Lord, and he spent most of his life preaching the gospel and seeking to point people to Jesus. In spite of his ill health towards the end of his life, he continued to take opportunities for the gospel, even preaching in his own church in Middleton just a few weeks before he died.

In retirement Michael and Rosemary loved their home in the village of Killeagh, and made themselves part of the community there as they sought to be a witness for Jesus. They also loved walking, and their garden, and there were times when I was just a little

envious of how well their fruit and vegetables did compared to mine. But Michael's love for the Lord, and desire to spread the Gospel, were still foremost in his life.

He was a devoted husband to Rosemary for over 60 years, and one of his main thoughts, as he approached death, was his loving concern for her. At his funeral service it was clear that he was devoted also to his children, Philip, Caroline, and Jonny, their spouses, and all the grandchildren, and that they in turn were deeply attached to him and would miss him greatly. The large attendance of neighbours and friends, some of whom had travelled long distances, clearly demonstrated that he was held in high esteem by so many who knew him.

His last illness began about 5 years ago, although for much of that time he was still able to continue with many normal activities. I was able to keep in touch by phone and also to visit him at times, and read and pray and speak about the hope of the gospel. Michael knew that hope, although at times Satan would cause doubts to enter his mind. I spoke to him about Bunyan's Pilgrim, who also had doubts and fears as he crossed the river. How realistic Bunyan was in showing us that Satan will never leave off tempting God's people right to the end. I also introduced him to a lovely old hymn which I think both he and Rosemary found helpful. Here is just one of the verses of that hymn:

Whate'er my God ordains is right: here shall my stand be taken
Though sorrow, need, or death be mine, yet I am not forsaken.
My Father's care is round me there, He holds me that I shall not fall;
And so to Him I leave it all, and so to Him I leave it all.

The Lord took Michael home in the early hours of 31 December 2022, with his loving wife Rosemary at his bedside. May she and all the family know the sustaining grace of God in these sad days, and may the hope of the gospel, and the hope of heaven, shine ever more brightly in their hearts.

Ken
Patterson

IN RETIREMENT
MICHAEL AND ROSEMARY
LOVED THEIR HOME
IN THE VILLAGE OF
KILLEAGH, AND MADE
THEMSELVES PART OF
THE COMMUNITY THERE
AS THEY SOUGHT TO BE
A WITNESS FOR JESUS.
MICHAEL'S LOVE FOR
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INTRODUCING NEW MISSIONARIES



ILIYA & CHRISTINA
MARINOV



RAFAEL & LIDIANE
RIBAS



TOBIAS & JULIE
HASLUND-THOMSEN



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INTRODUCING NEW MISSIONARIES



ILIYA & CHRISTINA MARINOV

A STORY OF GRACE IN A NEEDY HEART



When I look at my past, it always amazes me how far I have come. My life so far is a story of ups and downs, as perhaps is the story of most people. However, there's something very important. I am not the main character in this boy's life; God is! He's been the main character from the beginning.

I was a product of the marriage of a man and a woman with 23-year age difference. I was born following a very difficult and life-threatening caesarean section that almost took my mother's life. My first seven years were filled with pain, loss, and hunger in the midst of a troubled family and nation, having never lived under communism, but experiencing every bit of how that regime left our people. I was seven when, because of the economic situation in Bulgaria, my mother left to find a better life in a southern European country. My father was everything to me; he was father and mother, helping me with homework as well as cooking, working, and doing the chores. When I was 14, he was diagnosed with cancer for the second time in six years and, after a year of caring for him, he passed away.

After many troubles that I have been through, God has always been gracious to me, not allowing me to go deeper into sin. He found me before I found him. At the age of 16-17 I went for the first time to church. Aged 21,

I was chosen by my pastor at the time to go and study theology in England, and after reading Romans 3 I cried out to God. He graciously saved me and invaded my life. From then on, I knew in whom I have believed, and entrusted everything to him for his glory. At the age of 24 I came back and served in my local church for almost three years.

When 26, I felt the great and desperate need for a Reformed church in Ruse where we live, because I found out that 99% of the evangelical and protestant churches are charismatic. At the age of 27 I married my wife, Christina, who works as a solicitor and is also the most beautiful girl in the world. In 2021, a baby girl called Vera was born. At present we are seeking to obey the call of God to serve him in the church plant that started as a home group in 2016-17.

My life, and that of my family, is a story of God's grace being lavished on us from the beginning. Pray for us, pray for Bulgaria, pray for the church plant in Ruse, so that his name may be great among our nation.

In Christ.



**GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN GRACIOUS TO ME...
HE FOUND ME BEFORE I FOUND HIM**

Iliya
Marinov

INTRODUCING NEW MISSIONARIES



RAFAEL & LIDIANE RIBAS

Hello, I'm Rafael, my wife Lidiane and my children Bernardo (6) and Rafaella (9) are planting a church in the City of Portimão, in the Algarve Region in the South of Portugal! We are Brazilian, and are part of one of the Churches of 'Acção Bíblica', which is a denomination whose origin is in Switzerland; the fruit of the Revival in Scotland.

I was rescued by Jesus in the midst of the darkness of drugs and crime; his light shone gloriously on my life and since then I have dedicated myself to sharing the gospel to as many people as I could. The compassion of Jesus is probably the greatest grace that my family and I share, and our lives are totally dedicated to his call to care for his sheep.

I graduated from the South American Theological Faculty, which is part of the South American Theological Fraternity. As in Lausanne, and also with John Stott contributing significantly, this movement emerged in Latin America and set out to create a kind of Theology of Mission, as well as to unite Denominations for Mission.

The Lord made very clear in our hearts the task of planting churches that plant other churches and form pastors and pastoral families, and we have dedicated ourselves to doing that for some years now. We planted a church in Brazil in a very needy place, and after that we noticed the Lord calling us to Europe with the same mission.

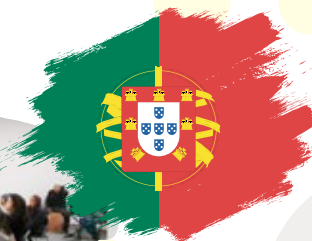
In Portimão, we started connecting with others, sharing our lives, our friendship and the gospel of Jesus approximately three years ago, and many people have been inspired to dedicate their lives to Jesus and his church since then. Even with the Pandemic and the Global Crises, these people have grown in love and grace every day and have dedicated themselves to the Mission. Therefore, this church plant has become very healthy and vigorous.

We are already working hard to form healthy future leadership: three elders along with their families. We also have many deacons to be trained; forty people have passed the new members class and are committed to us. Our public worship services on Sunday average fifty to sixty people and on Wednesdays we have a prayer service that is also well-attended.

Portimão and Portugal have some nominal Christians, some Catholics, but we have very few people with a new heart. The percentage of evangelical churches and evangelical Christians is only about 1% of the country's population. Portugal is a mission field that lacks the gospel; the culture is similar to the rest of Europe and reflects the entire global agenda of contempt and attacks on Jesus and his Church. The need to be able to speak Portuguese is also an obstacle for us to receive more planters and missionaries; we are the only country in Europe with this language.

We are very happy to be part of the EMF Family and we count on your prayers so that more and more people know the grace and love of our God! May God bless you endlessly!

A big hug from the Ribas family!



Rafael
Ribas

INTRODUCING NEW MISSIONARIES



TOBIAS & JULIE HASLUND- THOMSEN



My name is Tobias Haslund-Thomsen, I am married to Julie, who is a midwife, and we have Samuel who is 14 months. I grew up in a Christian family in Aalborg, Northern Jutland, Denmark. I was baptised at 16 and became involved in my local church, and took an interest in reformed theology in my late teens.

My pastor challenged me to step into pastoral ministry, which confirmed a sense of an inner call which I felt. Therefore, I dropped out of medicine to study theology and undergo pastoral training.

After a few years I became one of the pastors at the church in Aalborg.

After two years of studying and pastoring, I was asked to do an internship at a church plant as part of my Masters degree.



Originally, I was going to Greenland, but Covid cancelled those plans. In God's providence I did my internship in Haven Aarhus, where I have stayed to take on the church plant.

Denmark is one of the most secular countries in the world, even though the majority of the population are members of the State church. The city we are in (Aarhus) is the second largest city in Denmark; it has a large university and is the Danish city with the lowest average age and the lowest church attendance.

Haven is a broadly reformed, evangelical, and baptistic church. The church is in its early stages, as it was replanted when I moved to Aarhus in 2021, and consists of five families, young couples, young professionals, students, and a few older members. On a Sunday between 25-40 people in attend.

It is our prayer that the Lord will add more people from all generations and give us the strength to be a strong gospel witness in Aarhus, and, in the future, we dream that we can catalyse church planting efforts in other parts of Denmark.

To advance gospel work in Denmark and the Nordics I preach and teach in many circles, and I am on the council of The Gospel Coalition Nordic.

Tobias
Haslund-
Thomsen



EMF PRAYER DIRECTORY

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Tim Oldridge (Part-time – Finance Officer)

Wendy Evers (Volunteer – Magazine Co-ordinator)

Vivienne Birch (Part-time PA to
Mission Director)

Please note: in some countries, on marriage, the wives do not take their husband's surname.

DOCTRINAL BASIS

EMF's doctrinal basis can be found on our website: www.europeanmission.org/what-we-believe

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