

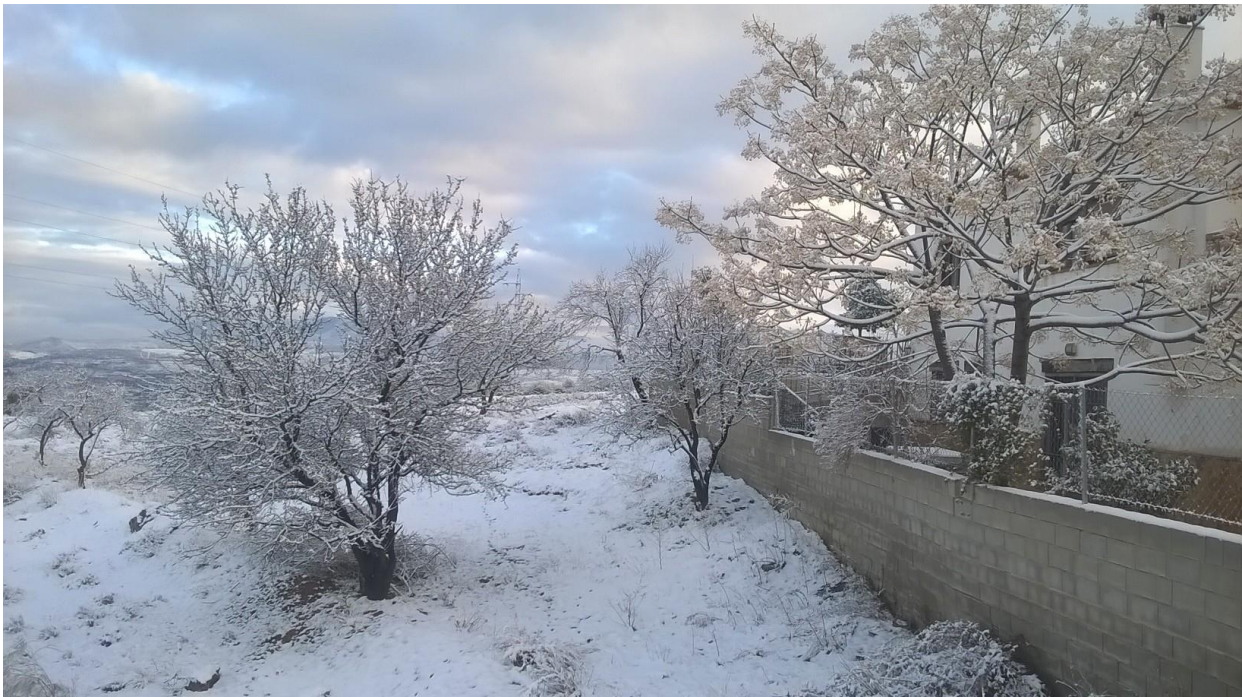
thewhitesinspain

March 2018

Dear St James,

As some of you know, we returned to Spain on New Year's Day to our house which had been broken into over Christmas. All though some of our valuables had been stolen including all my photography equipment and laptop the house had not been damaged at all. We managed to get everything cleaned up (including a defrosted fridge-freezer as the power had been turned off to) without the boys knowing what had happened. We knew there was a gang robbing houses in our area, so far there have been 17 in our neighbourhood. We wanted to hear God on what was happening as we had specifically prayed for protection and angels to guard our house. We fasted a couple of days to ask God for understanding and felt He said 2 things: 1) He is shaking people's foundations. Interestingly we live in an earthquake zone, but in a neighbourhood of comfortable middle class people for whom, materially, everything is secure. Suddenly there is uncertainty and their money which for many is their security has been stolen. 2) I felt God say our robbery was a form of intercession, identifying with our community, facing the thing they feared most and being OK. God did protect our house, nothing of the fabric was damaged and despite strangers going through everything we own we have peace, joy and no desire to transform our house into a prison of security systems as many of our neighbours have.

Through this process we have got connected with more people on our street and the whole neighbourhood are chatting every day on Whatsapp groups. People who have lived together for 10 years and never spoken are becoming friends. Please pray for increased connection, favour and influence amongst our community.



Strangers becoming Friends

The past 2 months have been a time of deepening relationships amongst our friends. One couple in particular called Alba & Felix we have spent loads of time with, doing life, sharing meals and spending time in family. We met them in a park last year and they have come to our house church occasionally, mainly for the friendship. Felix described himself as an atheist and in our gatherings whenever we spoke about Jesus or sang he would go outside to smoke. Over the past 2 months through sharing life, stories meals and inviting him to be part of our family he has changed so much. He now comes every time we gather as church, sits on the first row with his partner Alba and is clearly listening to every word. Last week we had an amazing chat for 1 ½ hours talking about Jesus, relationship with God, sharing stories of what God has done. He says he does believe and even asked if I would baptise his Son, and daughter when she arrives (Alba is currently pregnant). I love seeing this journey where Holy Spirit gently leads people towards Jesus and Father through time spent sharing life.

We can't rush this process, we can't speak into people's lives until there is intimacy, trust, time spent together where hopefully they can see something of God's Kingdom lived out. I always love to ask the question 'When were the Disciples saved? You could argue any point from when they left their nets right up to Pentecost. What I love though is this journeying with Jesus where they go from strangers to the point when he calls them friends (John 15:15) It's the daily walking with Jesus, watching him, being in His presence that transforms them even more than just His words. His words explain and make sense of what they have already witnessed. This process means giving up time, our personal space and being quick to listen and slower to speak. We long to see more of this amongst our community.

New gatherings, New Connections

Before we moved to Granada part of the vision God gave us for our house was to give time and space to worship. One part of this was a desire to have worship nights where we could worship, pray and wait on God without time pressure or agenda. We had our first one in Jan and it was an amazing time! We invited a few contacts we know from other churches in the city and spent the night in God's presence ending the night with communion. Everyone really met with God and our desire is to make this monthly opening it up to a wider group including our friends who don't yet know Jesus.

Liz has started a weekly woman's breakfast group which is going well. The idea being to create community and friendship with our friends and to share a simple story or reflection. The Spanish generally have very few friends and tend to only mix with their families, so this simple idea is quite radical for them but they really enjoy it.

For a while I have been wanting to meet a Catholic Priest. In Spain due to the history there is generally very little dialogue between, and at times animosity, from the Evangelicals towards the Catholics and viceversa. Although there are many things I struggle with around the institution and some of their theology I know that in the Catholic Church there are many who know and love Jesus. I want to build friendship with a Catholic leader and also to better understand the culture of the country we live in.

We were walking one Saturday in the hills near where we live and passed 2 middle age men. I greeted them in Spanish and walked on, one of them asked if we were English and then started to talk about C.S. Lewis. I said 'You should read Mere Christianity as it's a very good book by Lewis' He said are you Christians and I explained we are missionaries planting a church in the next town. He explained he is a Catholic priest from one of the churches in Granada, he was just in this area on a 1 week retreat. I asked for his number and said let's meet for coffee which we did the following day. We discussed Lewis, inner healing, discipleship and the Gospel for nearly 2 hours. He is an amazing man who loves Jesus and is on the same journey regarding community and house church. I hope to attend his church shortly and have invited him to our next worship night. I love how God engineers these meetings and we both feel that we were meant to meet.



Spring Rains

We have had a cold winter with lots of snow, including by our house (see photos) which seems so strange when summer temperatures can reach 50 degrees C. After the snow came 2 weeks of solid rain which is very unusual but much needed as we have had a drought the past few years. It is amazing to see everything green and grass instead of red dust! Now the Almond trees are in flower and there is life everywhere you look. I love this change and it reminds me of how the refreshing presence of God can bring life in dead places so quickly. Can bring restoration, transformation, healing and beauty to places and lives that looked dry and hopeless.

A few weeks ago I took our opposite neighbour Roystan out for a drink and chat. He is a British man in his 70s, very wealthy and although we have tried to love them and often take baking or soup he has been hard to get to know. We chatted about God almost the whole evening and I was able to share stories of what I have seen God do in my life and others. He wants to go out again soon, please pray that this is the start of something beautiful in his life!

The next few weeks start to get busy with a steady stream of visitors. We continue with our rhythm of bi weekly gatherings, worship nights, meals together and sharing life. We are focused on 2 couples who are hungry and open right now and who we feel could be future leaders. Also its been a time of re connecting with people we met early on but haven't been able to deepen the relationship. As always we want to follow the Holy Spirits leading and go where He is moving.

2 weeks ago, I was able to fly back to the UK for a Sunday to visit our friends at Welton Baptist Church in Somerset. It was so good to be with them and be encouraged by what God is doing in their community. We had a 'flying' pastoral visit shortly after from Matt Hebditch who heads up the leadership team at Welton, he was a huge blessing and encouragement to us. We love being part of one big Global family and really value your prayers and investment in us and Spain

Thank you so much for believing in us and joining us on the journey,

Love Chris, Liz, Leo & Samuel

