

Thewhitesinspain

June 2022

Dear St James,

Spring has flown by this year and we are now into Spanish summer with a mini heatwave last week and temperatures close to 40! Thankfully it's back to a more normal 30 now but it has been a strange year. We had a drought with no rain really between April 2021 and March 2022. Then we had about 5 weeks of much needed rain and snow on the mountains as late as early May! We also had 10 days of Saharan dust storms which coated everything with a thick layer of red dust which still hasn't gone away. The sky turned red for several days and many of our friends were talking about end times, what with a global pandemic, wars and now the blood red sky!



They may be right, but I know many times before people have felt this must be the end. We are just encouraging our friends that now is the time to seek God while He is near, while He has their attention. It is a time to hold contrasting emotions in balance, great sadness of the things we see around us but great joy in Jesus and what we see Him doing.

20 years ago I had the opportunity to visit Auschwitz whilst I was living in Poland. At the end of our visit my team leader asked 'what had we learnt about God that day?' I reflected on His ability to hold incredible pain and great joy together at the same time, that whilst the horrors of the WW11 were going on somewhere else in the world there was revival taking place. God can walk with us in our pain and our joy and be a refuge in both. I am glad to let God be God and realise we don't need to understand everything. There is so much mystery in life and yet I have never been more convinced by Gods goodness, faithfulness and ability to transform the most impossible situations, that slowing down, making time for the 'one' is always the best way. We can't change everything but we can love individuals well and this has infinite value.

Staying the course

We have mentioned before our friend Felix who (with his partner Alba) was one of the first people we meet here in our town. A self confessed atheist He has committed to us as we have to him, journeying and doing life together. He would come to gatherings but always avoid the 'God Part'. During lockdown his relationship ended in the worst way possible with 2 kids in the mix. We have tried to love the family through this, helped him with paid work (for Chris and doing up our cafe), shared Jesus with Him and been a friend. The other day he phoned me and asked what time we meet to pray in the morning. He said 'he knows God has been watching over him these past 2 years and wants to join us for prayer and to give thanks!' These things take time and so much of our culture is rushed. We need to take time, listen to Holy Spirit and be prepared to go, share and be bold as He leads us.

Another day we were praying, and God showed me in a picture a man sitting alone on a bench in one of the parks in our town - I got the name Jamie too. We have started going out again on the streets regularly to chat and pray with people, so we went to the place I had seen and there was a guy sat alone on the bench. He was from a rural village 1 hr away and just in our town that morning before going to France for 3 months the next day to work in a vineyard. His name was Alvaro, not Jamie, but I was able to share with him that God loved him, had seen him and wanted to get to know him. I was able to pray for him there and he seemed really grateful. I went back to our cafe and Tianna, the young daughter of our teammates, Dave & Kellie, was at the door holding her teddy. I asked her 'what's his name' she said 'Jamie!' We don't always get it completely right, but God loves it when we have a go.



We mentioned before about a couple John & Ruth (both early retired at 50) who moved to Granada just before Christmas. It has been incredible to see how God has put us in their hearts and they help us loads with the boys as we do life together. Ruth has had severe vertigo to the point where she couldn't cross any bridge without being a sobbing wreck on the floor of their car. We live in the mountains so this is an impossible situation and they were discussing moving to the coast as life was becoming too hard. She is from a nominal Catholic background but on a journey back to Jesus. We invited her to come to the cafe so we could pray for this situation. We shared stories with them both of healing we have seen God do and simply prayed. She started weeping and we asked her what was happening. She kept saying 'Its so bright, the room is so bright I can't open my eyes and just feel all this love pouring into me!' We told her this was Jesus here with us and this continued some time. The next day they had to drive to the coast which involves crossing several huge bridges very high up. They reached the first one and she said this love just hit her and she didn't feel scared any more! As of now she is 90% free from any fear and we keep praying for the last part. They have been living together as a couple for many years and raised 2 boys but weren't married. Last week they went back to the UK to get legally married but before they asked that on their return would I bless their marriage before God. They said for them this will be the real wedding! We have only know them a few months and are blown away by what God has done and that they would trust us with that honour! We went up the mountain behind our house (see photo) and I was able to share a word God gave me for them and to pray with them to bless their marriage.

A time of favour

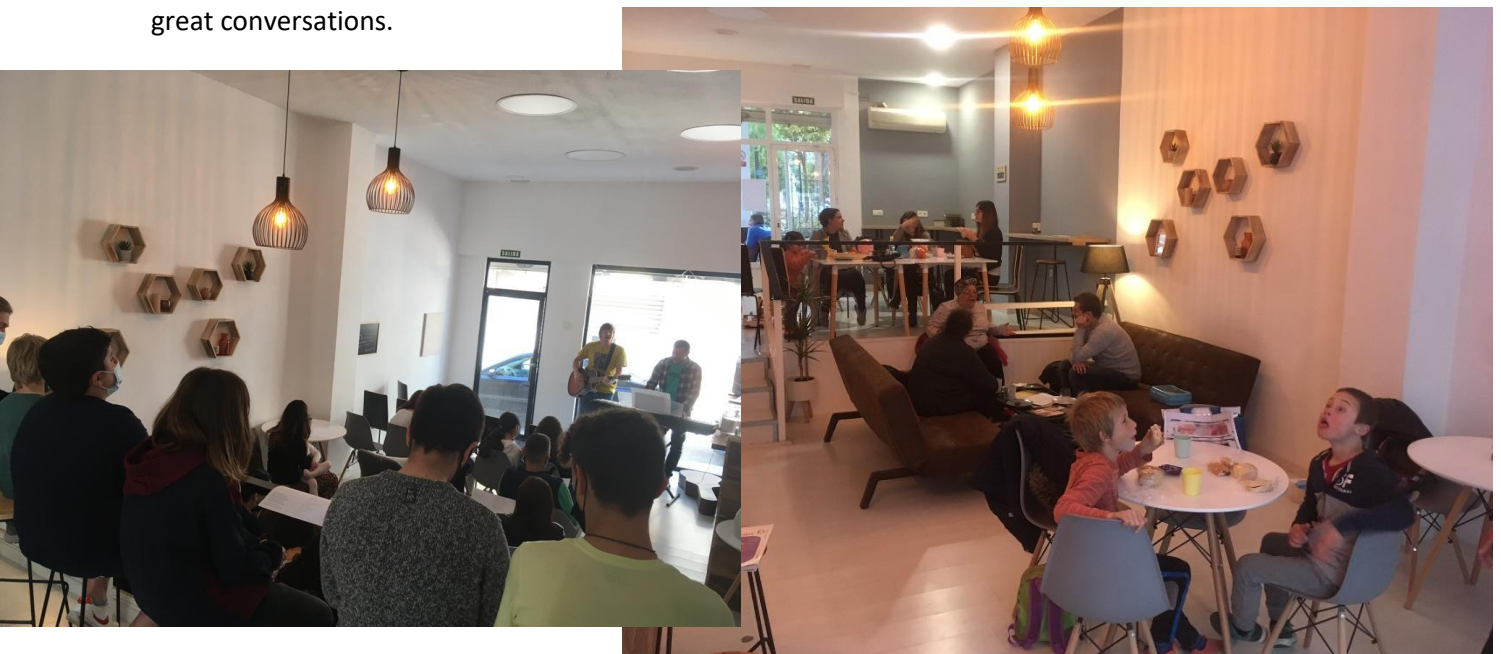
The weekly rhythm in the cafe has been really encouraging considering the signs have not yet gone up (long process hopefully finished in the next couple of weeks) so its not obvious what we are or when we are open. We have a steady flow of people invited or passing by, twice a week DBS groups, fortnightly youth group with 8-12 early teens including 3 Muslim girls. God has also been bringing people alongside to help and encourage us including the older missionary couple who live above our cafe and a born-again Spanish Christian teacher from one of the schools in our town. We have just heard that a 25-year-old girl teacher is moving from the UK in September to come and be part of what we are doing. This is so encouraging and we hope that more will come as well as teams visiting which has been on hold the past 2 years.



Our oldest son Leo is part of a special class for kids with additional needs in the school where Sam also goes. He has 2 amazing teachers called Bea & Lola who give the 5 children so much love and fun. There have been some difficult dynamics as 2 new children joined the class, both with extreme behavioural needs. A boy called Rici is one of 5 siblings who have grown up in a children's home and at the start displayed very aggressive behaviour to the other children. Leo really loved him and would go and hold his hand. They have now formed a really beautiful bond with Rici being very protective of Leo. We have had incredible favour with the Leos teachers and often Chris is allowed into the classroom, they have also brought the class to our cafe where we did a

prophetic art activity where we made each person a crown and wrote on the back what we felt God was saying to each person. 2 weeks ago Chris took the whole class and 3 teachers into the forest to do a treasure hunt. It was such an amazing time investing in and loving these beautiful children. Please pray that this class is full of Gods love, peace and presence each day!

At Easter we had Gathered Church for the first time since Christmas. Less than ½ the people we invited could come, and none of our Muslim friends as it was still Ramadan, yet we still had 50+ It was such a good time involving some sung worship, a short talk and then a team treasure hunt around our town. This ended back at the cafe for tea, coffee and hot cross buns. Events are always loads of work and very tiring as there are just our families doing everything but it was so good to have the place full of people, life, noise and great conversations.



St James visit

It was so good to see you all in May!! We loved being part of the church when you still met inside a tent in an old Anglican building with a leaking roof. Now 11 years later the building is repaired but it was so good to see you still have the same pioneering DNA and passion for mission & Church Planting! It was so good to spend time with you, sharing about Spain and seeing so many young people with a desire to use their lives to follow and serve Jesus. Let's plan to have a team come and visit in the next 12 months!!

After 2 years of not having any visitors or teams it has been nice to start to have people come and visit us. Some family, old friends and recently a team of 4 from a Church we partner with in Bedford. They were such an encouragement to us, and it was so good to worship, pray and hear God together and then to go out on the streets to meet and pray for people. We look forward to hosting more teams and having more visitors after the summer break.

We are just about to start the 11-week summer holidays here in Spain, the boys have done amazingly this year and its been so good to watch them makes friends and be part of our community. Sam plays for our towns football team and Leo is involved with a climbing club where he is completely included in everything and has made some good friends. We will be in the UK for a few weeks mid-July to mid-August and look forward to seeing some of you.

Please pray that whilst we are away the seed sown into people's hearts and lives will keep growing and bear fruit. That when we start again after summer there is a momentum of people hungry to journey with us and Jesus!

God bless you and thank you for journeying with us!

Chris, Liz, Leo & Sam.