

link



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Crosslinks at



Look out for the Crosslinks stand at the ReNew conference in Leeds, 23-24 September. ReNew is a network of churches working together locally, regionally and nationally to pioneer, establish and secure healthy local Anglican churches. Mission Director John McLernon will also be leading a seminar on 'Staying hopeful with the global church'. Come and say hello if you're attending, we'd love to hear from you.

Image: renewconference.uk

Join us in prayer

Join us at our online prayer meetings. We meet in the evening on Zoom with supporters to hear from and pray for Crosslinks mission partners. Sign up at pletters@crosslinks.org to have the Zoom details sent to you each month.



10 Sept, 7:30pm

with Brada and Yatzia Radanovic, serving in Serbia

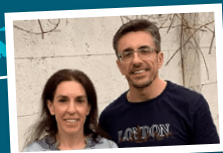


16 Sept, 7pm

with Jem Hovil, serving in East Africa

21 Oct, 7pm

with Jirka and Keira Kralovi, serving in the Czech Republic



4 Nov, 7:30pm

with Josh and Cathy Hooker, serving in Northern Ireland

18 Nov, 7pm

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Which master will you serve?

We have a new Prime Minister in the UK, but in Romans Paul asks us to vote on one of two masters that matter so much more.

As I write, our country goes to the polls tomorrow. We will vote to elect our leader who will determine how our taxes are spent, who will receive the brief and codes of our nuclear deterrent and who will shape our day-to-day lives for the next five years. By the time you read this, we will have had a new Prime Minister – or we could say a new Prime Master – for almost two months.

In Romans 6, the apostle Paul lays out two ways, two choices, two Masters. And these two Masters matter so much more than whoever our new Prime Minister/Master is, important though that position is. Whichever Master we serve – and we must serve one – has eternal consequences. In fact, Paul uses even stronger language than ‘serve’ in verse 16: *Whether you are slaves to*

sin, which leads to death, or slaves to obedience which leads to righteousness.

Whether a master is good or bad, a slave is bound to them. And as followers of Christ, we are bound to him. Paul calls the church in Rome and us today to live under our master Jesus Christ with the joy and certainty that he alone brings eternal life. To round off his glorious argument in verses 15-22, Paul gives us two truths in verse 23 that will motivate us to live under Christ as our Master.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Firstly, sin pays a wage – death. *For the wages of sin is death* (verse 23a). Life under slavery to sin might look free with enticing choices promising fulfilment and no consequences. But guilt, shame and eventually death come knocking. In the end, the apparent freedom of ‘I’ll live however I want’ turns out to be slavery, and there’s a penalty to pay for a life opposed to God. Master Sin never fails to pay his slaves what they earn and what they deserve.

And yet secondly and wonderfully, God gives a gift – eternal life. *...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (verse 23b). And this eternal life comes with abundant blessings: a restored relationship with God forever, forgiven forever, freedom forever, fullness forever, righteous forever. This ‘slavery’ is like no other.

But how did those born into slavery under Master Sin come under Master

Righteousness? *But thanks be to God that though you used to be slaves to sin, you have come to obey from your heart the pattern of teaching that has now claimed your allegiance* (verse 17). We, along with these Roman Christians from the first century AD, have placed our allegiance and our confidence in the gospel. Through obedience to the gospel that comes from faith, we come under the shelter and security of the gospel which now keeps us safe for all eternity.

He opens his nail-scarred hands to all, regardless of race, colour, sexual orientation or background

So, there’s no reason to go back to our former Master Sin. That way lies guilt, shame and death. Rather, having been set free from sin through the power of the cross, we live as slaves who are children of God, the King of Kings, a life which leads to fruitful holiness now and a glorious eternity with him.

And our kind, generous, gracious life-giving Master is available to all. He opens his nail-scarred hands to all, regardless of race, colour, sexual orientation or background. He does this as we hold out the gospel across the world through our mission partners and project partners. And he does this as we call on people to respond to his words in repentance and faith, as they believe the good news. What a Master we have!

Rupert Shelley, Director of Mission Partnerships



A biblical view of poverty

We think of poverty as a consequence of the broken world, but the implications of sin and grace go deeper than we realise.

What do sin and grace have to do with caring for the poor? What does the Lord Jesus mean when he says that he has come to proclaim good news for the poor (Luke 4:18)? One answer goes something like this: our world is broken because of human sin. Poverty is a consequence of this brokenness. In his grace, God rescues us and sends us into his world to make disciples and to care for the poor.

There are lots of things that are true in this answer. But the implications of both sin and grace go deeper than we realise. In order to understand how wonderful God's grace is in the context of poverty, we need to know who the poor are in the Bible.

Poverty in the Bible is fundamentally a relational category. The Old Testament often uses "the widow, the orphan and the alien" as a synonym for the poor. For each of them, a relationship is broken – the widow has lost her husband, the orphan his parents, the alien their people. In the Old Testament, the poor are those who are disconnected from their community and from their land, and therefore cannot provide for themselves. They are also frequently the victims of oppression, violence and injustice. As Victor Hugo says in *Les Misérables*, *It is the sad fact about poverty that the moment comes when it destroys relationships.*

The Old Testament's answer to poverty, built into the shape of the covenant, is relational. The poor are relationally included in a way that allows for their material provision. The book of Ruth tells the story of two widows, Ruth and Naomi. Ruth is also an alien. Boaz, a righteous man, includes Ruth into the community of his harvesters and therefore into the social life of Bethlehem. He puts into practice the laws of gleaning with liberal generosity, providing food for Ruth and Naomi. He then fulfils his responsibility as a kinsman-redeemer to complete the incorporation of both women into the community. Boaz's righteous integrity and care shows how God designed the covenant to address poverty.

We see the early church working out what it means to put these Old Testament principles into practice. Their context is quite different. They live under a new covenant; their environment is considerably more urban. Despite these differences, the apostles ensure that widows and orphans are included in the community of the people of God, the church, and are generously provided for (1 Timothy 5:3, James 1:27). Care that was once provided in a rural village is now offered through an urban church.

If we understand that poverty is fundamentally relational, the answer is obvious ...

But why is the gospel good news for the poor? If we understand that poverty is fundamentally relational, the answer is obvious. The proclamation of the gospel itself is wonderful news for the poor. It heals their broken relationship with God, with other people and with the created order. Of course, these things are also true for the rich. But because the rich are comfortable and materially secure, they tend to be middle class in spirit. Because they're not poor in spirit, they're not 'blessed' (Matthew 5:3) – it is harder for them to repent and believe the good news. The New Testament imagines that as the gospel is proclaimed, the poor will hear and receive good news. In God's grace, they will be gathered into a new community that loves, cares and provides for them.

David Williams leads the Church Missionary Society of Australia's development and training ministry in Melbourne, Australia

Catholic inclusivity challenges the evangelical church

As Pope Francis encourages inclusivity, there is confusion amongst evangelicals. Is this an opportunity or a danger? Associação Proclama is giving churches in Portugal the knowledge and understanding to respond in an informed way.



Last summer, 1.5 million young people descended on Lisbon, Portugal to celebrate World Youth Day. This annual Roman Catholic event is headed up by Pope Francis who presides over masses, prayer vigils and meetings. The aim is to promote spiritual unity and inspire and strengthen the faith of young Roman Catholics. Despite the polemic surrounding the costs (the local council had to stump up almost €3 million for the stage alone), the media coverage was largely favourable, in part due to the Pope's repeated affirmation that the Church was for everyone. 'Todos, todos, todos', he repeated again and again. Everyone is welcome. No one is excluded.

With such an inclusive message, perhaps it is no surprise that several evangelicals were persuaded to join in, actively collaborating through music, dialogue and ecumenical services. Others simply went along to watch but were impressed by how many enthusiastic, zealous and sincere Roman Catholics there were.

Some are wondering whether we should forget our 'petty' differences and unite for the sake of the gospel.

All this, taking place at the same time as a well-known evangelical in Coimbra decided to recant his faith and embrace Roman Catholicism, has led to much

confusion amongst evangelicals. Some are wondering whether we should forget our 'petty' differences and unite for the sake of the gospel. After all, isn't what unites us greater than what divides us?

This highlights just how little the current generation of evangelicals understand about the doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church. For despite all the headlines, the reality is that the Roman Catholic Church maintains teachings that seriously diverge from fundamental evangelical beliefs, rejecting Christ alone as Saviour and Lord, the Bible alone as supreme authority for faith and life, and faith alone as the only way to salvation.

Take sin, for example. In Roman Catholic theology, sin is a wound that impairs our relationship with God. However, although we need God's help to get better, we can cooperate with him in that process, thereby contributing to our salvation. Being baptised, taking part in the Mass, praying the rosary and earning indulgences are all part and parcel of the doctrine and practice of the Roman Catholic Church.

However, in the Bible, sin is not a wound; it has caused a radical breach between God and humanity that results in death (Romans 6:23). We were 'dead in [our] trespasses and sins' and 'were by nature children of wrath' (Ephesians 2:1-3).

The reality is that there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves; nor can we cooperate in the salvific work of God. Our only hope is to trust in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus, who died on the cross in our place, so that we could be forgiven and receive life.

To go a small way towards bridging this gap of confusion and lack of understanding, we set up Associação Proclama.

This difference in theology is not minor. For ultimately, it minimises the problem of sin (which is a capital offence against our Creator God), it diminishes the person of Christ (for it makes him insufficient to deal with our sin), it undermines the need for the cross (for if sin does not lead to death, then Christ did not have to die), and it relativises

the authority of Scripture (for it places tradition over and above the Bible).

To go a small way towards bridging this gap of confusion and lack of understanding, we set up Associação Proclama. This small charity aims to equip and strengthen Portuguese evangelical churches. Back in May, we ran a series of conferences on Roman Catholicism with the help of three excellent speakers from the Reformanda Initiative. We were taught, challenged and encouraged to reject the siren call of unity at any price. Pray for us and those who attended, that we will hold on to the historical, apostolic, biblical gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed in his word. Pray for Associação Proclama, that as this ministry develops it would genuinely serve and strengthen churches here in Portugal. And finally, pray that as brothers and sisters in Christ, we might continue to fight the good fight and remain faithful to the end.

Joe Clarke serves as pastor of Comunidade da Graça and leads Associação Proclama in Coimbra, Portugal



Hunting for Jesus through the pages of Scripture

Sue Aranzulla explains how she has been using Old Testament stories and illustrations to communicate the gospel to the next generation.

Sue Aranzulla serves in Bologna, Italy, where her husband JP is pastor of Forte Torre Church. While visiting the Aranzullas in Bologna, Beth Buchanan, Director of Mission Personnel, interviewed Sue about her writing ministry.

Sue, tell us about your writing ministry?

'All about Jesus' is a new series of five volumes, aimed at 7-9-year-old children and their parents. The volumes are: The Third Day, The Substitute, For the Nations, The Son of David and The Day to Come.

The project was born out of the desire for families to apply the Old Testament more accurately to their lives and for the next generation to understand that all Scripture speaks of Jesus.

How did it come about?

From infancy my parents taught me the Holy Scriptures. I grew up loving Old Testament stories and even telling them to my teddies! But only when I got to university did I begin to understand how all these stories were about Jesus.

Events, which occurred centuries before the birth of Christ had something to tell me about him, both in the typologies, which anticipate Jesus, and in the treasure troves of hidden prophecy.

Before moving to Italy, I worked for an association that organised camps for young people. 20 years ago, while preparing a training day, I read this verse in the Bible. 'Christ rose on the third day *according to the Scriptures*' (1 Corinthians 15:4) – which means there are passages in the Old Testament that speak of the third day AND the resurrection. I set myself the challenge of finding them...and that research is now compiled in the first volume that takes children and their parents on a journey of discovering other things that happened 'on the third day.'

The more I read, the more I see that every Scripture speaks of him. The whole of history revolves around Christ. All the promises of God 'in fact have their yes in him'. Only a sovereign God could have written such a profound, rich and full-of-unity book. How I would have loved to have been with Jesus, walking along the Emmaus road after the resurrection, when he explained to his friends that all the stories in the Bible are about him!

Therefore, this series is written with the desire that children have the same experience as those disciples. I want to take children in search of Jesus, to believe that there is ONE story in the Bible, designed before the foundation



of the world, of which Christ is the centre. This is why the book covers are a treasure map, and there is a child at the end of every chapter with a magnifying glass poking out their pocket. The treasure, of course, is Jesus.

What's different about your books?

In this series there are five volumes, each with a different theme. Each volume contains five stories chosen from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings and connects them to Jesus. Some of the stories are not so well known which means even an adult can discover hidden treasures! For example, the first volume explores the third day of creation, Hosea going home because the exile is over and Esther entering the presence of the king to cancel the decree of death.

Each chapter ends with the opportunity to reflect on the story through some questions and prayers. Children can write and think about the personal implications of what they've heard. The applications aren't exhortations



to be good but encouragements to be thankful for how the Lord has revealed himself in that story. The prayer is that children from a very young age can see the beauty of Jesus Christ and that families can share precious moments of discovery together.

Another aspect of the book worth highlighting is the quality of the illustrations. Just as God inspired the hearts and hands of the craftsman Bezalel and Oholiab to communicate his glory in the building of the tabernacle, I think the Lord has gifted Eunice, a dear Sicilian sister, with exceptional gifts and creativity. The text of the book series is adorned with beautiful images that arouse in readers the wonder of the gospel.

In compiling the books together, Eunice and I have been struck again and again how the LORD chose principally to communicate his covenant love through story. Narrative is the predominant genre in the Scriptures. We would never dream of reading to children the concepts of complex doctrines like

propitiation. But, with illustrations of the day when the high priest entered the tabernacle once a year, it really is possible to communicate to children through pictures how Jesus turned away the wrath of the Father when he entered the holy place once for and all, presenting the sacrifice of his blood in the throne room.

What encouragements have you seen?

For years I have been passionate about clubs and camps for the next generation. I have found teaching Old Testament narrative fruitful ground for explaining God's grace. For example: Rahab, under the protection of the greater captain at the last trumpet; Ruth, the foreigner who received abundant loving kindness from her redeemer; Naaman, who humbled himself like a child to be clean. However, time and time again, when I teach the four gospels to children in my neighbourhood who have attended Roman Catholic doctrine classes, I find my young listeners presume to know these stories well enough already. For example, last term we went through the passion narrative and struggled with the children's dogmatic insistence that Mary had ascended too. How much better to proclaim Christ from the unknown territory of Old Testament stories and invite them to believe in the Lord without the distraction and confusion of their wrong input.

God willing, these books will one day arrive in the UK and Ireland. But for now, only Italy has the joy of savouring Jesus in this series.

True treasure

Prosperity preaching and its accompanying abuses are growing in Africa. To the poor its message offers a false hope that leaves many worse off. As we share the true good news, we are seeing eyes opened and students inspired to bring the light of the gospel to their communities.

'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.'
Matthew 13:44

Many churches in Africa claim to offer treasure. Financial breakthrough is frequently promised in churches across the continent. To people burdened with deep poverty, a message offering prosperity seems attractive and freeing, but the reality is cruel manipulation. Many end up disillusioned as they are burdened with ever greater demands to pay pastors to provide their 'breakthrough.'

Jesus Christ offers true treasure: knowing him and enjoying life in his kingdom forever. Johannesburg Bible College (JBC) aims to equip and inspire men and women for Bible teaching ministries, proclaiming a better gospel than the false prosperity version so widely believed here. Our course at JBC starts with a module asking 'What is the Gospel?' For many, it is eye-opening to realise that the good news is about Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. Others arrive with some understanding of sin, the cross and the resurrection, but haven't seen how these truths connect, or how they shape our lives today. We pray that over their

year or two years with us, their lives and ministries will be reshaped as they see just how good the gospel message is, and the true value of God's kingdom.

Prosperity preaching is often combined with a self-centred model of leadership where the pastor, or 'man of God', is very highly exalted ...

One student living in Kliptown, an area of informal housing (tin shacks) in Soweto, was increasingly convinced that those around him needed to hear God's word. He says there are many who preach prosperity in his area but very few who preach the cross of Christ. As he continued through his two years at JBC, he grew in maturity and deeper conviction of the gospel and has now started a church in his area. It is a joy to hear of people turning to Christ and growing in him as they realise the true treasure that is offered in Jesus.

Prosperity preaching is often combined with a self-centred model of leadership where the pastor, or 'man of God', is very highly exalted in the church. We long that understanding the gospel would reshape students' lives and model



Above, below: Johannesburg Bible College

of ministry as well as the content of their preaching. As JBC staff, we seek to be an example of the truth leading to godliness. Former students often speak of the impact of seeing the college principal serving tea and coffee to students in a culture where the 'chief' normally sits back while everyone serves him. Treasuring Christ leads to glad service of others rather than grasping at position and prosperity now.

Pray that both JBC staff and students would grasp ever more deeply the treasure of God's kingdom, and so joyfully and wholeheartedly follow Christ. Pray for Christ-centred preaching and Christ-shaped leadership to spread throughout Johannesburg, South Africa, and beyond.

John Miller serves at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa



Cemeteries, celebrations and sins like scarlet

It is easy to look down on followers of empty religious traditions but Matt Gutler considers again the longings behind these traditions in Moldova and the message of grace we all need to apply.

A long queue of six or seven buses was blocking the bus lane on the main road out of the centre as Sarah and I left our apartment. This was not, as is typical for Chişinău, a stationary traffic jam. Instead, a fleet of buses had been organised to take Moldovans to visit the enormous cemetery on the edge of the city.

Moldovans ... visit the graves of their deceased loved ones and adorn their tombstones with wine, food and flowers.

‘Paştele Blajinilor’ or ‘Memorial Easter’ is one of the biggest events in the national calendar. Moldovans travel to their local cemetery to visit the graves of their deceased loved ones and adorn their tombstones with wine, food and flowers.

For some, this is a very religious exercise. Andrei Corobcean, lecturer at Moldova State University, sums up this perspective when he writes, ‘to achieve forgiveness of sins for the deceased, you need to sacrifice something to obtain God’s goodwill.’¹ For others, it is an enjoyable tradition that shows respect for family and culture.

One Moldovan journalist writes that ‘reflecting on others’ lives helps us become better individuals and guides us on our own life paths.’²

And for others, it’s an excuse for a party. Orthodox priest Octavian Moşin reflects that over the course of the day, many Moldovans drift into ‘talking, eating,



Moldova has lots of crosses on road junctions as well as cemeteries, often with donation boxes underneath or candles to be used for prayers.

drinking, and other behaviour typical of those who do not live in humility.’¹ Anyone who’s spent more than a few days in Eastern Europe can read between the lines here!

While a lot could be said about the religious idea of praying for the forgiveness of deceased relatives, it would need a far longer article, and an apologetic for excluding apocryphal texts from the Bible (the Orthodox church accepts the apocryphal 2 Maccabees 12:46, as a case in point).

Here, it’s perhaps more worthwhile to think about those who follow the traditions without considering themselves religious. The idea of

self-improvement and striving for good deeds is prevalent, particularly among young people in Moldova. Many have stepped away from the Orthodox church, but still long for a guiding principle in their lives.

“Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow”

However, Isaiah 64:6 puts a spanner in the works of our attempts to better ourselves – ‘All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.’ If we think that any amount of reflection, memorial or self-improvement can give us a leg to stand on before God, we have deeply misunderstood the extent of our sin.

But we have also misunderstood the extent of God’s grace. Isaiah’s words do not appear in a vacuum, but in a book that opens with a chapter including this beautiful promise from God – “Come now, let us settle the matter,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18). Our sin is taken away and we are made clean not by the prayers of our descendants or for our descendants, not by our good deeds and traditions, but by the precious blood of Christ, poured out on our behalf.

This is something we all need to hear and be reminded of, whether we’re a religious tradition-keeper, a respectable moralist, a wild hedonist – or an observer of another culture

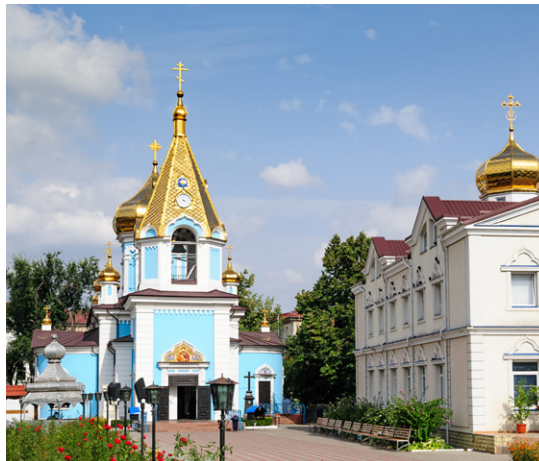
We are more sinful than we could possibly understand, and God is more gracious than we could ever dream. This is something we all need to hear and be reminded of, whether we’re a religious tradition-keeper, a respectable moralist, a wild hedonist – or an observer of another culture, often tempted to feel superior. What we all need is Christ, the cross and God’s amazing grace to undeserving sinners.

Matt Gurtler serves at Logos Church in Chişinău, Moldova

¹Mihailă, Patricia. <https://www.moldova.org/ce-are-pomenirea-mortilor-cu-apa-sambetei-si-paganismul-tot-ce-nu-stiai-despre-pastele-blajinilor/> (Translated from Romanian)

²Vrabie, Elena. <https://moldovamatters.substack.com/p/my-childhood-memories-from-the-easter>

Orthodox monastery in Moldova’s capital, Chişinău



Church Mission Consultation



‘The seminar’s blend of theological insight and practical guidance has significantly enhanced our church’s desire to make disciples of all nations.’

Rev Rob Philips, Rector St Mary’s Eastrop, Basingstoke

‘It was wonderful to see students being excited about God’s plans for the world and the part he assigns to us in mission ...’

Rev Rob Brown, Associate Minister, Christ Church Durham

Crosslinks are privileged to serve local churches from a range of denominations in the UK and Ireland as together they fulfil Christ’s great commission to take the gospel to the nations. We are therefore delighted to offer your church a Mission Consultation.

Our aim is to encourage your church with a renewed desire of how they can play a meaningful part in God’s global mission. In our experience, churches that engage globally are equipped – and therefore blessed – locally.

A Crosslinks Church Mission Consultation is designed to equip churches/PCCs/church leadership teams to think biblically and practically about their local church engaging in global mission.

What will it look like?

- **Two hours** over an evening (or as part of a staff away day or church weekend away)
- Refreshing **biblical principles** for global mission
- Considering how to **practically engage** your church family with those serving overseas
- **Tailored time** to suit your church’s needs such as Bible talks, interactive workshops, constructing deliverable outcomes in a Mission Policy, and offering a suite of resources for small group study

Get in touch with Rupert Shelley, Director of Mission Partnerships, as together we take God’s word to God’s world: rshelley@crosslinks.org

Meet a trustee!

We talk to Vicky Widdows about what is involved in being a trustee and why she enjoys it.



Who are you and how did you become a Christian?

Hello, I'm Vicky Widdows, married to James and with two almost grown-up children. I'm part of Grace Church Dulwich in southeast London and have been involved there since the church was planted 19 years ago. I work as the church administrator part time, co-lead a mid-week Bible study group and help out with outreach work at a local care home.

I was brought up in a church-going family and went to university calling myself a Christian. It was there that I first heard faithful Bible teaching explaining the gospel clearly week by week at church and the Christian Union and really understood what it was that Jesus had done for me. I turned to him in repentance and faith.

Why did you decide to become a Trustee?

I've been a member of Crosslinks for over 20 years, always praying for and interested in the work of the Society and supporting individual mission partners through the churches I have attended.

I really enjoyed seeing behind the scenes of Crosslinks' ministry ...

During lockdown, I was asked to become the clerk of the Board of Trustees, attending meetings on Zoom and taking the minutes. I really enjoyed seeing behind the scenes of Crosslinks' ministry – how exactly our giving is spent, hearing firsthand from mission partners who joined the meetings remotely, listening in on strategic decisions being made and discussions about the future gospel

direction of Crosslinks. Then, after a couple of years as clerk, I was asked to consider becoming a Trustee. I was delighted to say yes and was pleased to be voted in at the AGM in 2023.

There are papers to read beforehand – finances, strategies, policies – but it's time well spent

As a Trustee, I attend around six meetings a year (some in person, some online, and one residential meeting). There are papers to read beforehand – finances, strategies, policies – but it's time well spent. I've recently been involved in drafting a Trustee Handbook and interviewing prospective mission partners. It's a privilege to be entrusted with the finer

details so together we can make wise decisions.

What would you say to someone considering serving in this way? And to someone who isn't?!

What a wonderful way to serve the Lord! The Board of Trustees needs all sorts of different people on it, so if you think 'I wouldn't be suitable' then you probably would be! It's also serving that doesn't necessarily look very 'glamorous' or even obvious, yet it's of great importance to maintain the gospel legacy of Crosslinks. If you are passionate about the mission of Crosslinks, are comfortable in meetings and have a few hours to spare a year (many workplaces give you time off for Board of Trustees work as part of charity involvement) then it is a really valuable and fulfilling thing to do.

Below: A student evangelistic event in Belgium, Bible teaching in Kenya. Crosslinks trustees help maintain the gospel focus of our work, supporting the church in ministries around the world.



New look, same message

We have been working to improve the quality and clarity of our communications. Polly gives us an inside view into the work behind our new look and feel.

Have you noticed anything different about our 'look' in this magazine? In collaboration with Tiger Finch Creatives, a Christian design agency, we've spent time thinking and planning about how we can improve the quality and clarity of our communication.

'God's word to God's world' has long been our strapline and the summary of our mission partners' ministry. They're all involved in word ministry around the world – planting and strengthening churches and training gospel workers. So, perhaps it was almost inevitable that 'God's word to God's world' would inspire our new cross-shaped logo.

We have retained the essential concept from our original logo – a globe and a cross – but simplified the shapes and focused on the message in our strapline.

God's word

to God's world

God's word



to God's
world

 **Crosslinks**

The vertical beam coming down symbolises God's illuminating word – his revelation to us in the words of Scripture – and reflects our commitment to Bible-centred ministry.

The horizontal beam going out symbolises the work Crosslinks mission partners do in sharing the gospel with people all over our broken world, bringing God's light to the lost.

Wonderfully, God is growing his church as he equips people to share his word, and so the four quarters created by the cross are expanding as God adds many different people to his kingdom.

That's why we've gone for a new name for our magazine too, with the aim that each issue of *Link* will connect you with overseas mission taking place around the world.

It is important to say that while we may have changed our look, the focus and direction of our work continues. We remain committed to global gospel ministry, and we remain thankful for your support and gospel partnership.

Polly Phillips, Communications Editor



Above: The choir at a local church in Mkushi, Right: Andy with a senior elder



Ministry in the slow lane

The reality of mission work is not all action and excitement, as Andy Symons shares. He gives an insight into his first year in Mkushi and why it is worth taking time to build the right foundations.

Slow. That's the story of our lives at the moment.

We moved to Mkushi in December 2023, from just outside Kitwe, where I was teaching Bible handling skills to mostly young people at a small residential Bible college. I am now aiming to teach the same skills, but to local church leaders in a particular group of churches. The aim is to go to where they are and to

work with them at their pace, in their setting and in their language – because we're desperate for people in Zambia to go to a local church and hear the good news of Jesus Christ explained and applied faithfully. Sadly, Zambian churches have become a home to prosperity teaching with an African lilt to it, Word of Faith theology, motivational talks (think 'success' and 'destiny') and

personality cult theology (spiritual fathers – 'Apostles', 'Prophets', 'Bishops' – whose 'grace' you walk in).

But it's a slow work at the moment Why? Well, I am trying to learn Bemba, the language spoken by most people in this area. I've never seriously tried to learn a language, nor seriously needed to learn a language in order to work effectively. And learning a new language, for me at least, is slow going! There is an American missionary in the area who is fluent in Bemba and a great teacher, so I meet with him once a week to learn some Bemba. I also have little flashcards with vocabulary, which I add to as regularly as possible, to practice and grow my Bemba vocab. I have tables to try and learn different tenses, possessives, noun classes in the singular and plural and more. And I try to hear and use Bemba in town and at church, when visiting local churches. But it's not fast work!

As well as that, there is the slowness of getting to know who I am working with.

There are 28 churches with pastors, elders and deacons in each of them – so there are lots of people to meet! That takes time. Then there's going beyond just meeting people to actually forming relationships with people. Then add to that the prayerful seeking of establishing strong relationships with strategic people who can help me to better serve the churches here. The result is lots of conversations and meetings and meals spent trying to get to know who I'm working with.

Lastly, there's the slowness experienced in family life. We're all getting used to new things with school and friendship and church. We're getting to know a new area, new shops, new neighbours. And that all takes time. It's slow.

It reminds me that this is God's work, God's timing, God's purposes

But, like slow food, I think this slowness is good. I'll be honest, it's frustrating to know that there's a deep need to teach people to handle the Bible faithfully and not being able to do it properly yet. But the slowness is necessary. It reminds me that this is God's work, God's timing, God's purposes. And the slowness will build a foundation upon which, God willing, I can serve the kingdom of God here in Zambia in a way which will bear fruit that lasts because it is embedded in heart language and relationship. It's worth going slowly for that.

Andy Symons serves in Mkushi, Zambia



Church partnership in action on the ground

Could you take your church's partnership with your mission partners one step further? Could your church send a small team out to serve short-term alongside your mission partners for a particular purpose?

A short-term mission trip doesn't need to be very long. Perhaps the mission partners are running an evangelistic events week or leading on a bilingual summer camp. Perhaps it's just a 'normal' week of overseas mission.

There may be people in your church who want to partner more intentionally with mission partners, or who are beginning to explore global gospel

mission for themselves. Or maybe there are people in your church who speak the language of the country your mission partner serves in. This was the case at Emmanuel Bristol, who sent a team of three Spanish-speaking volunteers to join Julian and Nicky Milson who lead Iglesia de Jesucristo in Valencia, Spain, for the church's first holiday club earlier this year.

Julian and Nicky were greatly encouraged by the team:

'The vast majority of our ministry is in Spanish, so it was great to give Spanish speakers/learners the opportunity to use their language gifts with us in a missional context. The church family were wonderfully encouraged by their visit too, as a practical expression of partnership in the gospel. One thing that made the team particularly easy to accommodate was that they were ready and willing to do anything and everything that was asked of them, but they were also happy to occupy themselves and didn't expect to be entertained by us for the whole visit. They were clearly here to serve us and our ministry without giving us more work to do.'

The Milsons were particularly encouraged by members of the church family ... giving up their time to volunteer, even if it was a bit out of their comfort zone

And Kit, the student worker at Emmanuel Bristol who visited as part of the team of three, testified to how exciting it was to see the Lord at work in Iglesia de Jesucristo:

'The Milsons were particularly encouraged by members of the church family being 'bought in' to the idea of holiday club and giving up their time to volunteer, even if it was a bit out of their comfort zone. They were also encouraged by the number of children who came along and particularly those who then came



Above and left: Emmanuel Bristol's team get stuck into the holiday Bible club in Spain

to church on the Sunday with their families. As well as these things, we were encouraged by spending time with Julian, Nicky, Jemima and Theo – getting to know them better and strengthening our relationship with them as mission partners.'

There are many ways to strengthen your gospel partnership with the mission partners you support. If you don't know where to start or if you'd like support running a team, contact Anastasia Gibbs, Crosslinks Short-term Mission Coordinator, and/or the mission partners you're hoping to visit. Crosslinks can offer safeguarding advice and suggest ways to ensure your visit is a benefit to the mission partners.

With the help of mission partners and Crosslinks, you'll be able to work out when is best, how long to go for and what getting involved will look like – and strengthen your gospel partnership.

Start the conversation:
short-term@crosslinks.org

Your membership opens a world of gospel opportunities to the lost

**Crosslinks serves the local church as it
takes the gospel to the nations
handing out gospel tracts in a Muslim
marketplace,
sharing Jesus with Buddhist students,
teaching the biblical languages to
underground pastors.**

Gospel partnership isn't a new idea – it's over 2,000 years old. It's how the Apostle Paul established his ministry, alongside gospel partners – individuals and churches – who prayerfully and financially supported his work, and sometimes went with him.

Crosslinks members pray for and give towards global gospel ministry, maintaining Crosslinks' gospel convictions and enabling mission partners to continue serving cross-culturally.

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