

link

In this issue

People and Places

Lessons from the
Argentinian Church

Ministry and
motherhood

Africon



We kicked off 2025 by gathering 22 of our Africa-based mission partners and project partners (and 21 children!) in Kenya, for a four-day conference retreat. Ray and Rebekah Brown, former mission partners in South Africa who now serve at East London Tabernacle Baptist Church, taught us from 2 Corinthians 4-5 and spurred us on in authentic gospel ministry. Many of our Crosslinks family were greatly encouraged:

'I feel more part of the Crosslinks family and have a greater sense of partnership with others in Africa. It was so helpful being reminded to "fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen" and to "not lose heart".'
Jenny Miller, serving in South Africa

'The youth teaching was helpful and encouraging and there was also plenty of time to hang out with my friends. I loved it!'
David Miller, aged 13

Join us in prayer

Join us at our online prayer meetings with supporters on Zoom. Hear from and pray for Crosslinks mission partners. Sign up at pletters@crosslinks.org



3 March, 7:30pm
Simon and Abigail
Donohoe, Ireland



17 March, 7pm
Rev Prem Bhattarai,
pastor of Kantipur
church in Nepal



19 May, 7pm
Jonny and Ruth Pullar, Italy



12 May, 7:30pm
Trevor and Andrea Watson, Sweden

Crosslinks serves the local church as it takes the gospel to the nations. We do this by encouraging every Christian to get involved. We can help you play your part in God's plan for the world as we pray, give and go. Find out more at crosslinks.org



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'When my 7-year-old was asked by his teacher what his mum did, he was stumped. 'Nothing' was the answer...'

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Should we focus on nations or neighbours?

Is it realistic to expect busy churches to focus beyond their local areas? Rupert Shelley, Director of Mission Partnerships, discusses the surprising impact of engaging globally on your church.

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: *Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.* Revelation 7:9-10

Compared with the present-day enmity and disharmony that the nations of our world currently experience, John's beautiful vision of that certain future day when all people groups are assembled is breath-taking. His vision is truly one of the United Nations. Yet while we echo a loud 'Amen' to the great multitude declaring 'salvation belongs to our God', we may subconsciously find ourselves thinking 'as salvation is *all* of God for *all* the world, I need only concern myself with what I (and my church) do locally.'

But if local churches are to be healthy biblical churches, they need a truly global vision – because that is the heart of God and where his world is

heading. We need a way of regularly understanding ourselves to be part of God's purpose in fulfilling his promise of 'bringing unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ' (Ephesians 1:10), or we are only half the followers Christ calls us to be.

Rarely is the metric for the health of the local church how engaged they are in world missions. Usually it's how faithful and effective the Bible teaching is, or how many ministries are running. Yet Charles Perry, the first Bishop of Melbourne, said in 1851 that 'the best means of ensuring the health of the local church is a vital commitment to world missions'.¹ Read that sentence again! World missions and global gospel engagement can *never* be detached from a church's faithfulness to the Bible. Wherever we cut into the Bible, and therefore into the heart of God, we see his desire is for the nations – not just our neighbours.

Data is emerging that fewer men and women are going into full time gospel ministry in the UK. There are many reasons for this: across Great Britain

and Ireland, church attendance is declining; churches are contending against liberal denominations; local needs are overwhelming; the already overstretched resources of people, prayer and pounds are feeling squeezed. If we are honest, it can feel a bit of a 'risk' for church leaders to push global engagement. Consequently, the numbers of men and women wanting to serve in full time gospel ministry are not only down for the UK, but also for cross cultural overseas mission.

But if we don't lift our eyes to see what God is doing in the regions beyond, and see the needs and opportunities there, we risk not only being sub-biblical but our churches being far from healthy.

'But', you might say... 'the nations are coming to us! Just live in an urban area and you need only walk across the street to engage cross culturally.'

Yes, changes in modern migration patterns *do* mean many nations are coming to the UK (and provide huge opportunities for our local churches). But there are still so many (approximately

40% of the planet's population)² who are currently in unreached people groups. They cannot or will not come to us; we must go to them.

Our experience at Crosslinks is that when churches engage globally, they are blessed locally. The healthiest churches are those who are obedient to the word of God as they reflect the heart of God and live out the Great Commission. And far from harming local evangelism, we've seen that global engagement *has a stimulatory effect* on local engagement. For example, hearing about the evangelism cross cultural mission partners are doing is always an encouragement and often a spur for us to keep going with the evangelism in our local contexts.

This edition of People & Places aims to help you and your church engage globally with mission – with our prayer that you will therefore be blessed locally in your ministry. God's heart is for both the nations and our neighbours, we are praying yours is too.

¹ <https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/redeeming-babel/>
² Joshua Project



Mission personnel

Crosslinks exists to enable local churches and their members in the UK and Ireland to take part in God's mission through establishing gospel partnerships with mission personnel.

At any one time, a hundred or so mission partners will be serving long-term overseas in more than 25 countries. Crosslinks also enables teams and individuals to serve in short-term ministry placements alongside these long-term mission partners. Additionally, Crosslinks supports local project partners as well as enabling the training of pastor-teachers, evangelists and gospel workers in less well-off countries through the BEST bursary programme.

Seconded to a church or Christian organisation overseas for at least three years, our long-term mission partners are sent by their local church and supported by a wider team of churches and individuals.

The remit of Crosslinks mission personnel is not defined by geography but by wherever Bible-based ministries are needed. Mission partners are passionate about making Jesus known through the teaching of God's

South America mission partners

Matt and Helen Pope (with Eva and Judah) work with and mentor pastors from different denominations in Santiago, Chile.

Andrew and Bethanie Walker (with Maia, Emilio, Lucy and Noah) lead the Anglican Church of Mendoza, Argentina.



word. They serve by training pastor teachers, in church planting and strengthening, and in frontline evangelism.

'Brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured.'
2 Thessalonians 3:1

Read on to discover where our 91 mission partners serve. (Mission partners in sensitive locations are not included.)

Asia and Australasia mission partners

Janet serves at The Centre, teaching English classes and sharing God's word with Thai university students in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

John and Gillian Robinson (with Leah, Natalie and Joel) run The Place of Grace Learning Centre for children in the needy communities of Bangkok, Thailand.

David and Rachel Williams are seconded to the Church Missionary Society of Australia (CMS-A) to train, equip and mentor new mission partners in Melbourne, Australia.



What can we learn from Argentinian Christians?

The fast-pace of our productivity-focused culture can leak into church service. Bethanie Walker reflects on how lessons from the Argentinian church have been so valuable in her ministry.

Thirteen years after moving to Argentina, we keep being surprised by cultural differences. The most recent difference came to light when Andrew asked a church leader to give a newcomer a phone call during the week. 'I couldn't possibly do that!', he responded, 'I don't even know the person.'

He wasn't being difficult. It was just unthinkable for him to call someone before they'd had a face-to-face chat. In the end, the leader and his wife had dinner (until 2am!) with the new couple, giving him enough relational credit to phone another time.

When so much of life happens at top speed, with performance and productivity highly valued, it is easy for our churches to fall into this mindset. But relationships can't grow roots if they're rushed. In Mendoza, mealtimes and the hours spent chatting over a shared maté (like tea, drunk through a metal straw) show you care for someone in a much more meaningful way than a WhatsApp message.

How does this play out in ministry? Well, for us it's sometimes utterly frustrating. We like to tick things off a list and feel pleased at all we have achieved in a day. In Mendoza, if I tick one thing off my list, it's a good day! When I served in ministry in Oxford, I was expected to meet up with six students back-to-back for 45-minute slots each. If I meet up for one-to-one discipleship here, I block out three hours!

But now that we are used to a slower pace, we see the blessing it is. We know each other more deeply. We feel more like family. And isn't church just that?

The family of Christ, sharing the joys and hardships of life together. Encouraging each other when a job is lost. Weeping with the couple who are bereaved. Sorrowing when people you love move cities or countries. Rejoicing with new believers as they grasp an important gospel truth. Celebrating when an exam is passed or a milestone reached.

What can Argentinian Christians teach us? Among many things, they have taught us to value time with other people face to face. To not always rush to the next thing. To not let the aim of productivity kill gospel-hearted, interested, thoughtful relationships with church family.

We've begun reading Philippians as a church over our summer. Looking at Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodia, Syntyche and the rest of the Philippian church, we see the need for deep gospel relationships. We're so thankful that in Mendoza, we have time to do just that.

Andrew and Bethanie Walker lead the Anglican Church of Mendoza, Argentina.



Sensitive ministries

In some parts of the world, preaching the gospel publicly and open discipleship are not always possible (which is why this publication doesn't include full names or locations for some mission partners). Wherever they are, all these mission partners are engaged in bringing God's word to people who don't yet know or love him. Many of them have made particularly costly sacrifices to serve where they are, so your prayers for them are greatly valued.

Give thanks

- that God's word is not limited by human boundaries.
- for how these mission partners' gifts and circumstances enable them to serve in sensitive locations.

Pray for

- wisdom and eternal fruit in the most unlikely of mission fields.
- the Spirit's upholding of these often isolated mission partners.
- physical protection and spiritual encouragement.



The translatability of the gospel

The Bible stands out from other religions in its cross-cultural nature, with striking theological implications for mission and the credibility of the Christian message.

Why do Crosslinks mission partners work so hard to learn language? Wouldn't it be much quicker and easier to work with an interpreter? Or to serve the Lord Jesus in places where English is widely spoken? We might give lots of pragmatic answers to these questions. For example, in parts of the world where gospel needs are greatest, Christian interpreters may be very hard to find. However, there are deeper theological reasons why learning language is so vital in mission. These reasons go beyond the pragmatic and are deeply rooted in Scripture.

The Bible is an extraordinary book that shows us the translatability of the good news of Jesus. This is in stark contrast to other world religions. For example, in Islam, Allah speaks Arabic. The Qur'an cannot be translated and retain its authority. The Bible is very different. For a start, the Bible is written in three different languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. As the story of the Bible unfolds, God reveals himself in a wide range of cultures and through three different languages.

The text of Scripture also teaches us that God's word can be translated and retain its power. We see this in two ways. First, when the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament, they almost always quote the Greek translation of the Old Testament, not the original Hebrew or Aramaic. Second, the vast majority of New Testament

scholars believe that the Lord Jesus conducted his ministry in Aramaic, while the Gospels are written in Greek. This means that when the Gospels quote the Lord Jesus, they are giving us a translation of Jesus's original words – and when we read Jesus' words in Mark's Gospel, for example, we're reading a translation of a translation!

Perhaps the most striking moment in the New Testament that points us to the translatability of the gospel happens at Pentecost. God could have worked the Pentecost miracle in one of two ways. He could have set apart Peter to proclaim the gospel in Aramaic, and then miraculously enabled the gathered Parthians, Medes, Cretans and Arabs to understand a new language. If Pentecost was a Muslim event, this is how the miracle would have worked, with all the listeners wonderfully understanding the single language that God speaks – Arabic. But this is not what happens at Pentecost. Instead, somewhat chaotically, the Apostles are simultaneously empowered to preach the gospel in the languages of the hearers. All at the same time, Jesus is proclaimed in Parthian, Mede-ian, Cretan and Arabic. The result is a joyful cacophony.

... not that God speaks one language. Rather, it is that God speaks my language.

The wonderful implication of Pentecost, then, is not that God speaks one

language. Rather, it is that God speaks my language. I can hear the gospel and respond to it in my own tongue. This is what amazes the crowd – 'each of us hears the wonders of God in our own tongues' (Acts 2:11).

... it is vital that we serve in humility, giving away power by learning language.

The history of Christian mission has been a story of God's word being translated into different cultures, contexts and languages around our world. Mission partners have learned languages because they want people to follow God in their own language, not somebody else's. We do not proclaim a foreign God who comes from somewhere else. We proclaim the one true God who made everyone and speaks every language. This truth remains especially relevant in the twenty first century. In our post-colonial context, where English is a 'power language' and is so widely spoken, it is vital that we serve in humility, giving away power by learning language. It slows us down. It makes us learners not experts. We feel weak and foolish. All of these are good things. In the long run, we know that people are best evangelised and best disciplined in their own language, not someone else's ... because God speaks their language.

David Williams is seconded to the Church Missionary Society of Australia (CMS-A) to train and mentor new mission partners.

Africa

mission partners



James and Lucy Buchanan

(with Sam, Hannah, Sophie and Rachel) lead Hope Church Auckland Park in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Alun and Debbie Burt

(with Likhona, Ilana, Malachi and Timothy) lead St Thomas Church Heideveld in Cape Town, South Africa.

Rick and Alanna Creighton

(with Asha, Conor and Jack) serve in theological training at Jos ECWA Theological Seminary in Jos, Nigeria.

Jem Hovil from the UK, serves the Church of Uganda's BUILD training initiative across East Africa.

John and Jenny Miller (with David, Matthew and Samuel) serve in theological training at Johannesburg Bible College in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Andrew and Eunice Moody (with Joy) are involved in training South Sudanese pastors in Ugandan refugee camps and women's ministry in Yumbe, Uganda.



Rachael (and Bernie) Muluuta

are at Oakhill Theological College, London where Bernie is studying in preparation for their return to Uganda. Rachael audits courses and writes ministry training materials for Word of Life in Kampala, Uganda.

Gerald and Louise Mwangi

(with Jeremiah, Daniel and James) train youth workers in Nairobi, Kenya.

Nat and Helen Schluter

(with Miriam, Christopher, Bethany, Isaac and Azola) lead Johannesburg Bible College in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Andy and Rachel Symons (with Haydn and Daniel) work relationally with church leaders in Mkushi, Zambia, to help them interpret and apply the Bible faithfully in their contexts.



Alison Talbert researches nutrition interventions for mothers and infants at Kenya Medical Research Institute in Kilifi, Kenya.

Adam and Nomfundo Tomalin

serve at Christ Church Fredville in semi-rural KwaZulu-Natal in partnership with other local churches.

Janet Webb serves as a Bible worker at Lighthouse Academy, linked with Villiersdorp Community Church, in the Western Cape, South Africa.

Portia Yiadom serves in women's work and student ministry at Relite Africa Ministries in Accra, Ghana.



Good News for Africa?

The prosperity gospel is not the only false gospel impacting the African church. Thorsten Prill explains the threat of the power gospel, hyper-grace gospel and gospel of legalism.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the message of the church's mission. It is a message of love, grace, forgiveness and salvation. Yet many messages taught at mission rallies, crusades and conferences or preached in churches across sub-Saharan Africa bear little resemblance to the gospel the apostles of Jesus proclaimed.

The most prominent of these other 'gospels' is the prosperity gospel, which claims God wants to give us success, wealth and health. Instead, it creates false hopes and further marginalises

the poorest of the poor. It is only good news for those who preach it.

But the prosperity gospel is not alone. The impact of other 'gospels' on the African church should not be underestimated. Among these messages are the power gospel, the hyper-grace gospel and the gospel of legalism.

The power gospel lacks the cross-centredness of the apostolic gospel. With its emphasis on outward manifestations of the Holy Spirit, the power gospel has redefined 'spirituality'.



A church on the main road in the city centre of Namibia's capital, Windhoek. Photo, Kerstin Prill.

The marks of Christian discipleship and leadership are no longer godly conduct and maturity but the exercise of power: healing, deliverance, dream diagnosis and miracles. '[Healing] is an ingredient of the gospel' wrote the late Pentecostal preacher Reinhard Bonnke in his bestseller *Evangelism by Fire*. In some communities, 'the Christian 'man of God' has replaced the age-old shaman or witch-doctor'.

... confessing sin is considered introspective and legalistic

The hyper-grace gospel similarly loosens the Bible's clarity. This teaches that because all of Jesus' teachings occurred before his death and resurrection, they belong to the old covenant and no longer apply to us this side of the cross. A rejection of the Lord's Prayer is a hallmark of the hyper-grace gospel; confessing sin is considered introspective and legalistic, and asking for forgiveness from God results in works-righteousness, insecurity and obsession. Hyper-grace theology is very much a pick-and-choose theology. It happily points its followers to verses like Hebrews 10:17 – 'their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more' – but ignores Hebrews 10:26-39 which strongly warns believers against unholy living, and calls them to repentance and obedience. The simplistically selective 'effortless transformation' teaching of the

hyper-grace gospel cheapens the costly grace Jesus died to give us; 'the gospel which must be sought again and again'.

But where the hyper-grace gospel twists the biblical concept of grace, the legalistic gospel is short of it. For example, poor church members struggling to pay membership fees are shamed instead of receiving loving support. A church acting like that has forgotten giving is not by compulsion, believing that 'strict obedience to God's laws and particularly to the Ten Commandments is a way of gaining his acceptance'. Faith becomes a burden; it knows little of the joy of belonging to Christ, and in time slips into nominal church attendance to avoid social exclusion.

The tragedy of each 'gospel' is that they hide Jesus from people who desperately need him. There is a need for a pastoral response that welcomes confused victims of these 'gospels' and gives them time to work through their experiences and receive healing for their souls. There is a need for theologically orthodox African pastors to teach faithfully, and for foreign missionaries to work hard to understand traditional African culture, contextualising their teaching and acknowledging the manifold challenges of life in Africa. And there is a need for the African church to share the ultimate antidote, the one true gospel of Christ.

By Thorsten Prill, who served with his wife Kerstin in Namibia from 2011–2017.

1. Gary Maxey and Peter Ozodo, *The Seduction of the Nigerian Church*, p133
2. Andrew Wilson, *The 'Grace Revolution', Hyper-Grace and the Humility of Orthodoxy*, Think Theology
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p4
4. Samuel Ngewa, 'Legalism' in *Africa Bible Commentary*, p1421

Europe

mission partners



JP and Sue Aranzulla

lead Forte Torre Church and the Applicazione ministry training course in Bologna, Italy.



John Barretto is serving as an evangelist in partnership with Simon and Abigail Donohoe, in Cherrywood, south Dublin, Ireland.



Robbie and Lizzie Bellis

(with Lola, Caleb, Mia and Zoe) lead the Eglise Protestante Evangélique de Louvain-la-Neuve, in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.



Chris and Lizzie Brown

(with Shona and Pietro) serve in student ministry with Gruppi Biblici Universitari in Bologna, Italy.



Sam Bronsdon is an associate mission partner* and serves at Acorn Bibliai Képzés in Budapest, Hungary, training youth workers alongside Andy and Zsófi Oatridge. Sam is married to Tirca, a midwife.

*Associate mission partners serve for between 1 and 3 years, alongside established mission partners, projects or national church leaders as they prayerfully consider committing themselves to longer-term mission (read more on page 29).



James and Lou Clark

(with Max, Julia, Samuel, Reuben and Susannah) serve in student ministry at the Eglise Protestante Evangélique de Louvain-la-Neuve, in Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium.



Joe and Rachel Clarke (with Beth, Hannah, Joshua and Timothy) lead a new church plant, Comunidade da Graça, in Coimbra, Portugal.



Charles and Frances de Roemer

lead the Eglise Protestante Evangélique de Binche, in Binche, Belgium.



Alastair and Elise Donaldson

are equipping Irish leaders for ministry through serving at Calvary Church Loughrea in County Galway, Ireland.



Simon and Abigail Donohoe

are church planting in Cherrywood, a new fast-growing suburb currently without a church presence in south Dublin, Ireland.

After three years serving in Cyprus, **David and Margarita Ely** (with Aurelia, Phinehas and Felicity) are exploring what their next steps in further gospel ministry might look like.



Matt and Sarah Gurtler

are associate mission partners* and serve at Logos Church, an evangelical church in Chişinău, Moldova.



Josh and Cathy Hooker

(with Benjamin, Eric and Matthew) lead training ministries and local mission with the Diocese of Down and Dromore in Belfast, UK.

Graeme and Bequi Innes

(with Iona, Joshua and Ella) serve at Imago Dei Church and lead Moldova's Reformed Evangelical Alliance in Chişinău, Moldova.

Jirka and Keira Kralovi serve in student ministry, train Christianity Explored leaders and are involved in a church plant in Olomouc, the Czech Republic.




Julian and Nicky Milson

(with Jemima and Theo) lead Iglesia de Jesucristo in Valencia, Spain.


Andy and Zsófi Oatridge

(with David, Réka and Emily) train youth leaders with Acorn Bibliai Képzés in Hungary and lead a church plant. Andy is part-time Director of Langham Preaching: Europe and Caribbean.


Mark and Jane Oden

(with Sofia, Inez, Luisa and Archie) lead Chiesa Evangelica Neapolis in Naples, Italy.


Steve and Dawn Orange

(with Jemima, Max, Zeb and Nelly) lead L'Eglise Protestante Evangélique de Bruxelles-Woluwe in Brussels, Belgium.


Sena and Jane Ounate-Lare

(with Joshua, Eloise and Johan) lead the Eglise Le Bon Berger and La Source Network Churches in Caen, France.


Riste and Tea Micev

(with Ivona) are local mission partners*, leading Project Timothy in Serbia which trains church leaders and translates Christian books into Serbian.

*Local mission partners are non-UK nationals working for an indigenous organisation outside the UK. They may be ministering in their own country or another non-UK country.



Luigi Palombo serves in student ministry and is preparing to plant a church into the city centre of Milan, Italy.



Gillian Pegler serves as a prison chaplain and prepares resources for prison ministry through 'Time for Change Ministries' in Cardiff, UK.


Thorsten and Kerstin Prill

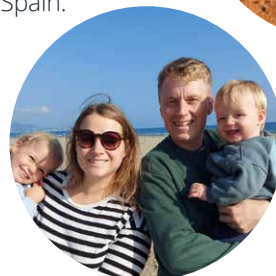
serve in Edinburgh, where Thorsten is the interim Rector of St Thomas' and Kerstin serves the church in Christian counselling.


Jonny and Ruth Pullar

are seeking to equip and encourage Italian men and women for gospel ministry through serving at Stupenda Grazia Church in Modena, Italy.


Brada (and Yatza) Radanovic

(with Matej and Ilaj) lead Grace Evangelical Church Novi Sad in Novi Sad, Serbia.


Chris and Rosy Redfearn

(with Lydia and Santi) serve as church workers at Iglesia de Jesucristo in Valencia, Spain.

Helen Sheridan serves in women and children's ministry at Calvary Church Castlebar, Republic of Ireland.


Chris and Lotta Strajnic

lead Emmaus Church Åkersberga and a discipleship training ministry in Stockholm, Sweden.



Tom and Liz Trump (with Lucas and Theo) pastor Emmanuel Etterbeek Church in Brussels, Belgium.


Neil and Sharon Watkinson

(with Anna) serve in international ministry, and will soon relocate to Sydney, Australia. Alongside other ministry there, Neil will continue to run Schools of Biblical Training in SE Asia and elsewhere.


Trevor and Andrea Watson

(with Emily, Grace and Alice) serve Gothenburg International Baptist Church in Sweden from their base in Belfast and develop training resources through Rotad Equipped.



Ministry and motherhood

Most of us love a clearly defined role in ministry, but mothers like Rachel face the challenge of dividing time between 'formal' and family ministry. She shares helpful insights for this juggling act.



I therefore aim to carve out and protect these times that will help them grasp Jesus as their Lord and Saviour more and more as they grow up. I'm learning that Bible study prep can wait, and I can cherish being a mum in the moment. I'm learning not to moan about some of the ways the Portuguese church is different to the UK church. Instead, I want them to see the blessing of a cross-cultural church family when elderly ladies over here make them a skirt or ply them with biscuits at the end of the service or greet us so warmly when we return to Portugal after six weeks of home assignment.

When my 7-year-old was asked by his teacher what his mum did, he was stumped. 'Nothing' was the answer he eventually gave! To be fair to him, there have been times when I, too, have been unsure how to respond to this question. After all, what *do* I do? What is my main role here in Portugal? Should I be spending more time 'working' or more time nurturing my family? My husband's role seems clearer – he's an elder of a church plant and his days and evenings are mostly filled with church activities. But my role seems less clear.

It wasn't always like this. Yes, before we left for Portugal, I was still a mum with small children, but I was also a primary school teacher a couple of days a week. Now the lines defining my role are blurred. I love being involved in the 'formal' ministry here, getting alongside female students and reading the Bible with them, getting stuck into children's work at church, and helping teach the

Bible to other women. But I also have the 'informal' ministry of raising four kids in a foreign land, far from our family and friends, and I long to do that well so that they might thrive as Third Culture Kids (TCKs).

Being on the mission field doesn't only affect the parents. This hit us early on. So, because my ministry includes my family, much of my time is dedicated to serving them: filling in school forms, helping with homework, giving lifts to friends' houses. Of course, lots of these are things you would've found me doing in the UK, but in another culture, everything is a little bit more complicated and unfamiliar. We also try to be intentional about doing ministry as a family. Our kids come to church with us, invite their friends to evangelistic events and together we've started a youth Bible study so that they and the other kids in church can learn more about Jesus. They pray with us for the

work here in Portugal, they help ready the house when we have a tonne of people coming for dinner or to stay, they are simultaneously our harshest and most supportive audience, and they help us pronounce the most difficult phrases in Portuguese (which were so much easier for them to learn than for us!).

The propensity for parents, and perhaps especially mothers, to feel guilty about how they're raising their children is huge. I often feel very aware that my children's lives are so inextricably intertwined with our ministry, and therefore they will inevitably have different experiences compared to other children in the UK. It has been really good to remember that my most important desire for my children isn't that they are always content, happy and have everything they want, but rather that they grow up knowing their Lord and Saviour who created them, and who loves them so much that he came to save them.

I still haven't worked out exactly what my role is and how much time to spend in 'formal' ministry or being a mum. But more importantly, God has been teaching me to enjoy the times I have with my kids here in Portugal whilst I can – being available when they get home from school, tidying the house together before we cook for 30 people or spending Sunday afternoon with church family. I'm thankful that whether clearly defined or not, I am blessed with the privileged ministry of loving my children and teaching them about the Lord.

Joe and Rachel Clarke lead a church plant in Portugal.



We need your prayers

Witches on the Christmas tree ... How can we reach a population in Ireland where few have contact with real Christianity?

It's hard to think of a place that is so lovely being so needy. County Galway is one of the most popular areas in Ireland. Yet you don't have to scratch too hard to unearth the desperate spiritual plight of many. Ireland has secularised so rapidly that many don't have the slightest idea about Jesus.

Yet there's the underlying tension of a past religious identity and the historical impact of religious institutions. Evidence of this secular, anti-religious mindset is everywhere. 'I never go to church, but I do say my prayers at home', said the young lady who rented my parents a room when they came to stay. Or consider a colleague in my part-time job finishing off his small Christmas tree with a witch decoration from Halloween. When I commented on it, he wryly replied, 'ah, what does it matter anyway?' In contrast, another colleague took a few minutes to enquire what I'd worked as in the past and was surprised when I said I was a Christian minister: 'What actually is a minister? What do they do?'

Your prayers are vital for these people and many others. They are vital for us too. While we are the workers on the ground, you are our fellow workers in prayer and partnership. Be assured of just how much we need you all! We are

encouraged to know you are asking for strength on our behalf when we feel weak; we see the answers to your prayers as we serve, and we know the Lord uses the prayers of his faithful people to prepare the ground before us.

We are still settling our family into life here, and balancing ministry alongside part-time work keeps life full. There is so much to do and often it feels like not enough time to do it. Pray we prioritise wisely and with confidence and peace. Pray that God, out of his glorious riches, may strengthen us with his power through his Spirit (Ephesians 3:16). Pray that our own time with the Lord who knows it all does not slip. We can do nothing apart from him.

If you're anything like me, sometimes you need reminding of what's really going on when we open our mouths and hearts to pray: we are talking, just as we are, to our Heavenly Father, and he listens and promises to answer. He knows our deepest needs and desires. He longs us to know him as he knows us. And he knows why he brought us to County Galway and the work he is including us in as he builds his global church.

Alastair Donaldson serves at Calvary Church Loughrea, Ireland.

Short-term volunteers

Crosslinks sends individuals and groups on short-term mission worldwide. This can be anything from two weeks to a year and involves working alongside established mission partners, projects or national church leaders.

My time serving at ISA has been **incredibly formative.** I can see my faith and personal relationship with God growing profoundly.

Harry Clarke, 1 year serving in Chile

Harry is studying Politics and Spanish at the University of Strathclyde and spending his year abroad with project partner Cristóbal Cerón at ISA Church, Chile.

Could you consider short-term mission as an individual, a couple, a church group or a gap year team or leader? Visit crosslinks.org/short-term to find current opportunities and talk to us about how you would like to serve.

God **has opened my eyes** to see how Jesus is Lord over all cultures and is greater than all religions.

Sarah Cutting, 3 months serving in Thailand

Sarah served in English teaching with Janet and reaching needy children in Bangkok with John and Gillian Robinson.

It was a great privilege to receive solid Bible training and be able to **put it into practice** as I served the kids and youth

Zac Walkingshaw served on a gap year team studying at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa, and serving at Hope Church Auckland Park with James and Lucy Buchanan.

Below: The team at Johannesburg Bible College



Project partners

Crosslinks supports indigenous partners running gospel projects in their own countries. These projects are all involved in training Bible teachers and church leaders, or in evangelism.

Prédica Fiel, Cuba

Havana-based Prédica Fiel is run by Alexis Pérez and trains church workers, planters and leaders to faithfully interpret and teach the Bible through weekly training and regional workshops to the 4,000 house churches that have sprung up since the 1990s.

The Arctic Diocese, Canada

Local clergy serve a population of 55,000 in an area covering four million kilometres. Recently, the youth ministry has grown, new clergy have arrived to serve in remote parishes and the recently opened Bible college has welcomed new students.

Marsabit Diocese Youth Worker, Kenya

Jomo Nderitu serves 64 churches in a region where Christian teenagers suffer persecution, tribal tensions and radicalisation. Jomo runs evangelistic and discipleship ministries and an annual youth conference.

GracePoint Church Youth Worker, Kenya

Serving in Kikuyu, Kenya, Ken Irungu is GracePoint's first dedicated youth worker. He mentors, disciples and teaches the Bible to children, teenagers, students and iServe Africa ministry apprentices.

St Julian's Centre, Kenya

Rev George Ochiel runs St Julian's Centre, which trains men and women in faithful expository preaching and word ministry for serving their local church as clergy, evangelists, lay readers and youth workers.

Nekemte School for the Deaf, Ethiopia

A community-based rehabilitation programme for children with a range of disabilities in Nekemte offering access to healthcare and education.

Christ Central Soweto, South Africa

This church, pastored by Rev Musa Ntinga, was planted in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa, an area of 29 townships and 13,000 students, with a vision to become an evangelical church-planting hub.



InterAction Camps, Belgium, France, Germany Each summer, InterAction runs bilingual holiday camps across Europe packed with sports, games and activities with the aim of explaining the gospel to the next generation.

Pāradaugava Reformed Church, Latvia In Riga, around 45,000 people attend church every week — but only a handful of churches prioritise faithful Bible teaching. Led by Mārtiņš Martinson, Pāradaugava Reformed Church reaches out to families and students with the gospel.

Kantipur Church, Nepal

Christians make up just 4.4% of Nepal's population, where evangelism is prohibited by anti-conversion laws. Pastored by Prem Bhattarai, Kantipur Church was planted in 2000 and is committed to teaching and preaching God's word.



Find out more at
crosslinks.org/project-partners

(Project partners in sensitive places are not included)

On unity

‘Unity’ is the theological buzzword of today. But what does it really mean? When does unity trump and when must it be abandoned? Alan Purser, former Director of Mission Partnerships, takes us back to what God’s word teaches in Jesus’ prayer from John 17.

Unity matters. It did to Jesus, so it surely must to we who are his disciples today. In fact, unity mattered so much to Jesus that he prays for it three times in the upper room, in John 17. Jesus’ request for unity is no crowd-pleasing platitude because what he asks for is no ordinary unity. It is unity on a level that is enjoyed between the Father and the Son within the Trinity (v21). And it is unity that will have a missiological impact: *so that the world may believe*.

John Stott cautioned ‘These are well known prayers. They are probably quoted more frequently than any other petitions of John 17. They have come

to be the proof texts of the ecumenical movement. But there are many who are familiar with these phrases who are ignorant of their context and are therefore unbalanced and even mistaken in their interpretation. It is important that we subject them to a careful and critical scrutiny.’¹ I hope to do precisely that, and to sketch out some implications for maintaining unity in our churches and for engaging today in God’s mission.

But what kind of unity is Jesus referring to? And between whom? A careful reading of the text yields some significant – perhaps even surprising

– answers, and makes sense of its connection with mission.

The structure of Jesus’ prayer is clear, falling into three parts. First, he prays for himself to be glorified as he fulfills his Father’s will in his death (v1-5). Then, he prays for his disciples to be sanctified and set apart for sharing the gospel (v6-19). Finally, he prays for those who will believe through their testimony to be united (v20-26). The unity is not just between subsequent believers; it is between ‘these’ disciples – soon to be apostles – and ‘those’ subsequent believers. Stott says, ‘Christ’s prayer is that ‘all’ – i.e. both the ‘these’ and the ‘those’ – may be one’.²

The significance of this can hardly be overstated. Jesus is first and foremost praying for unity between the apostolic church of the first century and subsequent generations of believers. In other words, he is praying that we today might believe the same truths, follow the same Lord, proclaim the same message, obey the same teaching, suffer for the same cause and share in the same hope as the apostles did. How can this happen?

Just as Luke records the first converts devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship (Acts 2:42) so, with a New Testament in our hand, it is marvelously possible for us to do the same. The second half of v21 is the means envisaged by Jesus to produce the unity for which he prayed: *that they also may be in us*. Jesus’ eternal fellowship with the Father is to be the pattern for the relationship between

the church and the Godhead. Again, Stott puts it helpfully, ‘The unity of the church for which Christ prayed was not primarily that we may be one with each other, but first that we may be one with the apostles and second that we may be one with the Father and the Son. The first speaks of a common truth, the second of a common life. And both are needed to unite the church.’³

Far from the notion that doctrine divides, Jesus taught that unity amongst his disciples would be secured by their loyalty to divine revelation (v11). Unity in the church is secured by the same means: unity in the truth. It is not institutional unity but confessional unity. 16th century bishop and Reformation martyr, Hugh Latimer, wrote ‘Unity must be according to God’s holy word, or else it were better war than peace. We ought never to regard unity so much that we forsake God’s word for her sake.’

What then of the connection between unity and mission? How is Jesus’ prayer for unity *so that the world may believe* answered? Only by adhering to apostolic truth will the good seed of the authentic gospel be preserved. Do we need to recover our confidence in proclaiming the gospel from the Gospels so that the spiritually dead may *by believing have life in his name* (John 20:31)? It is through that same testimony, alongside the work of the Spirit, that God’s mission will continue to advance amongst people of every nation until Christ returns. *That* is something to unite in prayer and practice around.

1,2,3. IVCF missions conference in Urbana, USA, 1970



Training local Christians: BEST study partners

The cross-cultural work that a mission partner offers is incredibly valuable, but it happens alongside supporting and enabling national gospel workers to take up church leadership and to be trained to teach the Bible well for themselves.

To this end, Crosslinks offers the BEST (Bursaries Enabling Strategic Training) programme to facilitate the equipping of local ministers in gospel work. Partnering with BEST means supporting a local study partner by helping with theological training fees and making a commitment to pray for them regularly.

This year, we have pledged to support 100 study partners from 21 countries studying in 32 colleges in 18 countries, and we need you to help us. **Could you enable a church worker to train for ministry through prayerful and financial gospel partnership?** Explore more at crosslinks.org/best

'I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the prayers and financial support you've extended to me and my family. Your generosity and faithfulness have been a tangible reminder of God's provision and care during this season of study and growth. Your prayers have strengthened us in times of uncertainty, and your financial support has eased the burden of school fees and expenses, allowing me to focus on my studies and ministry preparation. I am deeply encouraged by your partnership in this journey, and I pray that God richly blesses you for the role you are playing in equipping me for His work.'

Abel Mogita, studying the MA in Theological Studies at Africa International University, Nairobi, Kenya



Meet four of our BEST study partners

Esther Yohanna,
ECWA Theological College,
Zabolo, Nigeria



Bright Moono,
George Whitefield College,
Cape Town, South Africa



Luis Gonzalez,
Centre for Pastoral
Studies, Santiago, Chile



David Mishra,
Asia Graduate
School of Theology,
Kathmandu, Nepal



Associate mission partners

Associate mission partners serve for a longer period than a short-term volunteer, anywhere between 1 and 3 years. They serve alongside established mission partners, projects or national church leaders, to help as they prayerfully consider committing themselves to longer-term mission. Hear from a current associate mission partner:

Sam Bronsdon serves alongside Andy and Zsófi Oatridge, training youth workers through Acorn. He is married to Tirca, a midwife.

'Moving to Budapest as a young married interracial couple had its challenges, but we can look back and see how God was with us through it all.'

In our experience, short-term mission is a wonderful way to discover your weaknesses and therefore for God to display his goodness, mercy, and strength. The struggle of learning a new culture and language came with the provision of friends and a church community. Questions about ministry practicalities and finances were resolved. Doubts over my contributions were followed by stories of God's impact on other's lives.

I'm grateful for the blessing of Andy and Zsófi, who have been serving in mission much longer than I have. It's been a privilege to watch and learn from how they do life — balancing work and family, opening their home, sacrificially giving their time, and depending on God.'

Schools of Biblical Training

Schools of Biblical Training (SBTs) are short conferences over 4-5 days at the invitation of local church leaders. Their aim is to encourage and equip those attending to teach God's word more faithfully and effectively. SBTs begin with the basic principles of expository preaching and will study several Bible books in-depth, along with key doctrines and approaches to pastoral ministry. The aim is for SBT trainers to return for up to three years so they can build relationships with participants, develop knowledge of the culture and ensure

different biblical genres are covered. Recent SBTs have been held in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Thailand (for pastors in Myanmar), Egypt and South Asia.

Richard Coombs, Rector of St Matthew's and the Minster, Cheltenham, recently taught at an SBT in Kenya: 'It was such a joy to meet delegates at the conference (some of whom have been ordained for years)... They refer to themselves as Word Workers, shaped by God's Word and ready to work hard at opening it up to others, so that they too may hear the voice of God.'

Crosslinks office teams

Crosslinks has two office teams (one in London and one in Belfast) which work together closely, as well as praying together online twice a week.



Mission Director

John McLernon

Working with the Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team*, John oversees Crosslinks at home and around the world.

Mission Personnel Team

Led by Beth, the Personnel Team send and support Crosslinks mission partners, short-term teams and individual volunteers. They also support evangelistic projects and administer bursaries to enable theological and ministry training around the world.

Beth Buchanan

Director of Mission Personnel*

Dee Hemingway

Mission Personnel Support Manager

Susie Harker

Mission Personnel Assistant (p/t)

Ian Marden

BEST Coordinator (p/t)

Anastasia Gibbs

Short-term Mission and Projects Coordinator



Mission Partnerships Team

Led by Rupert, the Partnerships Team helps build partnerships between Crosslinks mission partners/projects and churches/individuals in the UK and Ireland.

Rupert Shelley

Director of Mission Partnerships*

Helen Burns

Church Partnerships Coordinator

Margaret McGuire

Mission Partnerships Enabler (p/t)

Polly Phillips

Communications Editor

Hub Team

Led by Mark, the Hub Team supports the infrastructure and staff team which underpin the work of Crosslinks.

Mark Hackett

Director of Finance and Operations*

Ade Adeoye

Donations Administrator and Data Analyst

Chris Mukhtar

IT Manager

Alex Powell

Finance Manager

Andrew Taylor

Accounts Assistant



Staff retreat

Ireland Team

Led by Richard, the Ireland Team helps churches and individuals across Ireland send and support mission partners and projects.

Richard Balmer

Ireland Team Leader

Valerie Gibson

Activities & Relationships Coordinator (p/t)

Pam Smyth

Office Administrator (p/t)

God's word to God's world

*'Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.' Psalm 119:105*



7

Schools of Biblical Training
training over 200 local church leaders



91

mission partners



serving in **27** countries



21

project partners



100

study partners



from **21** nationalities



17

short-term and associate mission partners



supported by

18

in our office teams



Crosslinks