

WINTER 2024

ECM LIFE

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION IRELAND
NEWSLETTER

HOW WE DO MISSION



ECM IRELAND

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN MISSION IRELAND
IS AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL,
EVANGELICAL, MISSIONARY ORGANISATION
WORKING IN EUROPE.

ECM'S MISSION IS TO



EQUIP,
CONNECT
AND MULTIPLY
FOLLOWERS OF
JESUS

THROUGH
DISCIPLESHIP
AND

CHURCH
PLANTING
ACROSS
EUROPE

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HOW WE DO MISSION

BY GEOFF DONALDSON



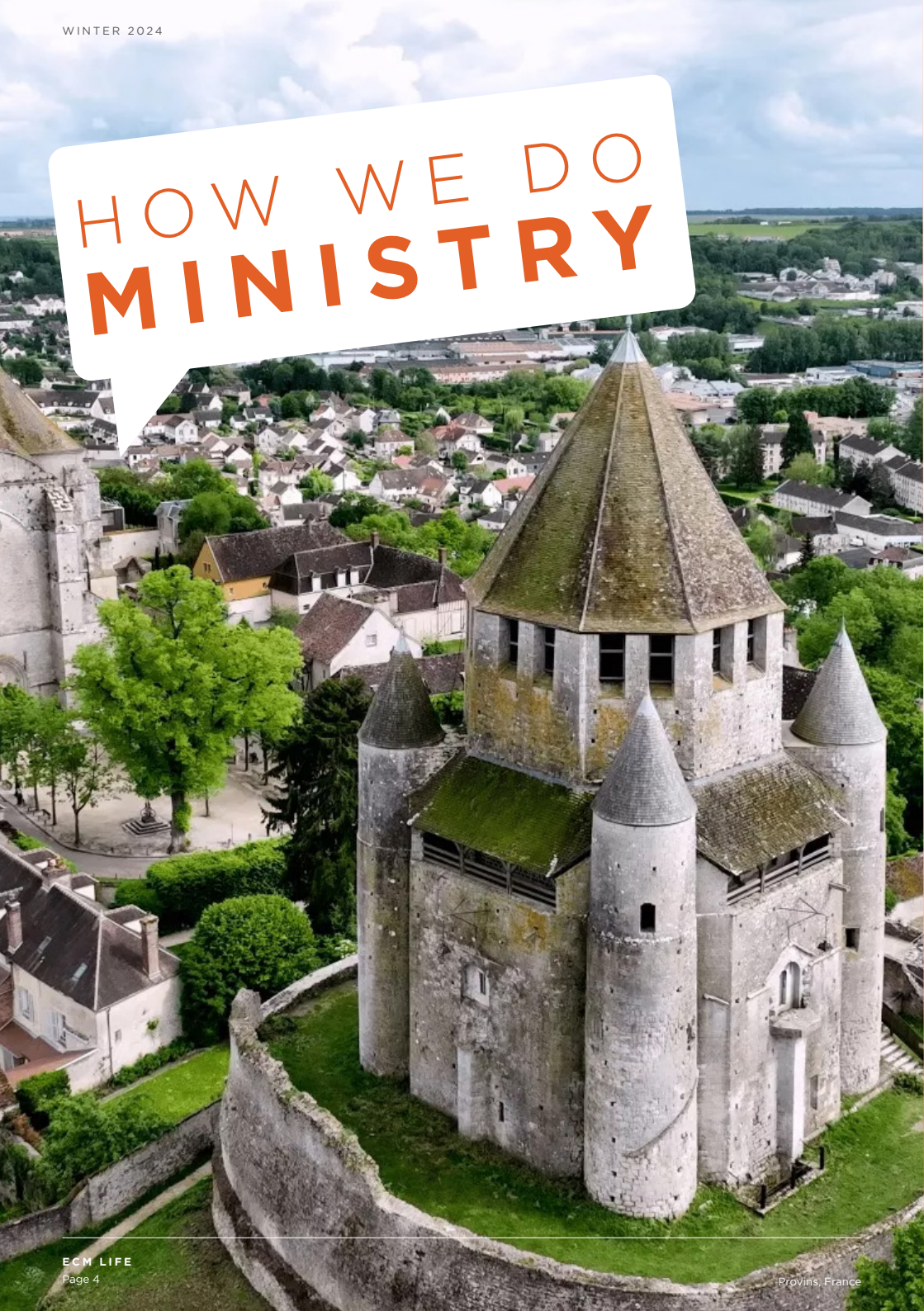
As you read the ways that our ECM Missionaries embrace the 'how' we do mission, I hope you are as inspired as I am in the way God is working in such diverse, ways but with one purpose – to reach Europe with the Gospel. These stories of responses to local needs demonstrate the ways our missionaries are seeking to make Christ known in creative ways in a rapidly changing world.

But is there more to the 'how' we do mission? Two recent things reminded me afresh of the importance of what happens locally in terms of answering the 'how' mission takes place. The first thing was the celebration of May Copes' 90th birthday. The way May has served the work of ECM Ireland over so many years through administration in the ECM office and in other practical ways is a reminder of the importance of how a life of faithful service contributes to the missionary task. Whether that service be locally in Ireland (see the article about our staff, Lourdes and Stephen) or in another country in

Europe it is vital to the task. The second thing was sitting recently with 3 women who fulfil the 'how' of mission through faithful prayer. Hearing these women of the East Belfast Prayer Group pray with so much knowledge into the lives of our missionaries was so encouraging.

Faithful service and faithful prayer are just two examples of the 'how' of mission. By reading this magazine and turning your reflections into prayer you too are part of the 'how'. So, with that in mind read on and thank you again for your support.

HOW WE DO MINISTRY





Baptism in Provins, France



David Gilkinson

Spain

I recently opened an email from an influential mission leader in Spain. It was a prayer update about a mission campaign, but the main theme was that this generation of young people don't have an interest in missions. I sat stunned as I tried to process the opinion and left the email unanswered, as I had no words with which to respond. Thankfully, in our experience, the opposite is true! Over this last summer we had more than 200 young people, most of them Spanish, involved in short term missions for 12 days. Here are some of the characteristics in how we mobilise young people:

1 Set the bar high. There's nothing worse than being signed up to a project with the promise that it won't demand much time, energy or resources... to find out that it does! We unapologetically tell churches and young people that this is going to require a lot of them, and it won't be easy. With few exceptions they rise to the challenge.

2 Relationships are key. We all need community. Technology has changed so much of the culture of young people, and yet, their need for real, face-to-face friendships with peers remains the same. Providing spaces for them to get to know and grow with other young people from other places is key in any ministry effort.

3 Protect the fun and the depth. Kingdom work is important; however, it doesn't have to always be serious. We protect time for the team to connect, relax, play and laugh together. We ensure that we have people around the team who are investing in their spiritual growth by leading devotional times and listening to them in the moments they need extra support. During a packed program, fun and discipleship can often be the things that get squeezed out. We intentionally protect the time for them to take place and watch as God transforms lives of the team members and uses them to impact others.



**Vimal and Louise
Vimalasekaran**
(Germany)

We have been working for the past 25 years in Southwest Germany ministering to thousands of refugees from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. Over the past 10 years, we have seen a dramatic increase of refugees. Most come with varying levels of traumatisation and disability, but that is where we can rely on God's wisdom and support to help us minister to these desperate people appropriately. We passionately believe that the Gospel is the answer for all human beings, especially refugees who need a place of comfort, security and love in Christ Jesus. Of course, this does not mean that we are less interested in caring for their physical needs.

We visit refugees in camps and be real in whatever ways we support and care, always pointing them to Christ. We work with the free evangelical alliance of churches in Karlsruhe and neighbouring cities, to establish networks and support their ministries to the needs of refugees, praying that the Lord will bring them to a knowledge and experience of the Gospel.

We have established an Evangelical Migrant Centre, where refugees can build up community life, cooking their native food, celebrating birthdays, children's work with games and creating an atmosphere of welcome to exchange experiences, in the hope to speak about the Gospel with them. We are also making efforts to support many traumatized refugees with local counselors.

"We passionately believe that the Gospel is the answer for all human beings, especially refugees who need a place of comfort, security and love in Christ Jesus."

We intentionally invite our refugees to events in the churches, or summer sports camps or Alpha Courses which are done through our networking of the churches and building up friendships. Most of our activities are very practical in meeting their needs, and are done on a one to one basis, by visiting the refugees in their camps, taking them to appointments in the cities, transportation of the refugees to events in the city or churches, and taking them out for meals or through our own hospitality opportunities.



Philippe Mayhew
France

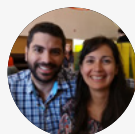
How to plant a Church in secular France?

As we travel to different parts of France for the Baptist Association, we are struck by the variety of ways in which churches are planted. Strategies are set but they are rapidly challenged by the particularities of the context and unexpected obstacles. Church planters constantly need to seek God's guidance and adjust, but there is one determining factor: the clarity in which the Gospel is displayed and preached. In the book of Acts, "the Word of God continued to spread" (6:7, 12:24, 13:49...). It is the key-element whatever the approach.

A year ago, four couples including us, joined forces to reach the medieval town of Provins (outside Paris). After much prayer and research, we found a place to meet, but it is in a basement! Not ideal to invite new contacts, but young people don't mind! Two of them recently got baptised and they keep inviting new friends who hear the Gospel for the first time. We decided to launch an Alpha Youth course in our home and around 20 attended. Praise God for the door he has opened for his Word. We recently found new facilities we hope to purchase, but we are waiting for the mayor's approval and God's confirmation.



Youth group dinner in Provins, France



Luciana Christoforidou
(Greece)

How do we do ministry at Petalouda Centre?

The Petalouda Centre focuses on education and community development. This ministry is committed to supporting the Roma community, one of Greece's most marginalised groups. The vision is to break the cycle of poverty and social exclusion through a Christ-centred program and to create a community of faith where the Roma people can become followers of Jesus.

We opt for a holistic approach by serving both children and adults, and a trust-based relational intervention. Many of the participants of our programs experience daily trauma and face numerous challenges, including high illiteracy rates and social exclusion.

We provide classes that promote literacy, job skills, and personal development. In our outreach program, we immerse ourselves in the Roma community, listen to its members, work to understand their identity, values, and cultural elements to build relationships by sharing our lives in Christ.

"In the DNA of the ministry, there is the opportunity for people to have a life-changing experience with God."

We integrate evangelism and discipleship with actively working to build a community of faith (church planting) as the foundation for sustainable change. In the DNA of the ministry, there is the opportunity for people to have a life-changing experience with God.



HOW HAVE I BEEN IMPACTED BY THE MINISTRY OF ECM?



Peter & Diane Shields

*ECM Supporters from
Orangfield Presbyterian Church*

Our first encounter with ECM was meeting Peter Crawford online at the Refugee Highway Partnership conference in Athens in 2022. We had worked with and visited many mission partners in Greece but hadn't met anyone linked to ECM. Meeting Peter had a big impact on us and that impact has continued. During his illness we got to know Anna and our friendship and support for her ministry in Athens continues.

Our own church missionaries, Suzi and Noah, were encouraged by Peter to join the ECM family and it has been wonderful to see how their service in Athens has prepared them for work amongst the refugee population in Belfast. Peter and Anna introduced us to Giorgos and Luciana, and we loved visiting Petalouda and Cosmivision and then being able to host them in Belfast.

It is humbling to observe ECM missionaries who devote their lives to serving God and serving others in very challenging circumstances. Their work is inspirational.

So, how does ECM work and what have we observed from the outside? Firstly, the introduction above shows how vulnerability in our relationships can bring a disparate group of individuals together into a wider supported family. Secondly, it has been humbling and inspiring to observe ECM families who are giving their everything to do God's work with groups on the edge of society. Finally, it motivates us. Two of our own church members recently felt called to volunteer in Petalouda after hearing about Luciana's work amongst the Roma community. Recently our church sent a team of 15 to connect with the projects in Athens. This interest continues to grow and shows no signs of stopping. We look forward to seeing what happens next.



Alex

*Ferrybank Christian
Community Church*

Alex has been growing. He has been part of Ferrybank church since it began in 2011, having moved with his family from Italy. He was part of kids' bible clubs and Pulse youth group, before heading to college. After a difficult time there, he returned to Waterford to reset and there encountered God's love and grace afresh and surrendered to Him.

In church Alex found a place to grow and was contributing to discipleship book clubs, and actively serving in church. He is always raw and real, and straight up in offering a welcome to others. He shared his faith story last Christmas, which shows some of how Ferrybank church has helped him.



"To those who might be resistant to religion I feel the first I will say is Jesus is not a religion... It's a relationship..."

"Church may be surprising to people, as it isn't somewhere you feel judged. You find someone there who has the same struggle as you, or has in the past, or understands your point of view. Won't be judging and asking how you got to this point. It's like a family."

"To those who might be resistant to religion I feel the first I will say is Jesus is not a religion, it is not give and take, do this exact thing or be at this place and you get this certain thing from Jesus. It's a relationship, it's a communication thing. Why would I follow religion if all these things happened? I completely agree you're right; I wouldn't follow religion either, but I would follow Jesus because Jesus and religion are two entirely different things."

We give thanks for those like Alex who are growing in the midst of a living and loving church. You can watch the full interview on 'Ferrybank Christian Community Church' Youtube.



HOW WAS I CALLED TO EUROPE?

By Shane McGloin

My first involvement with ministry in Portugal was in summer 2018. I was still a student at Belfast Bible College and I had chosen to go to Portugal for a month-long placement. I went to serve with Vila Real Baptist church through Awake ministries, who have been serving in Portugal for more than a decade.

This first trip sparked my interest in missions in Portugal, particularly seeing how much of a need there was for evangelism, church-planting and local church ministry. This initial exposure got me thinking and praying about serving the Lord there, until in July 2021 I moved to Portugal to serve as a full-time missionary in Vila Real and the wider 'behind the mountains region' with ECM.

The Lord used my first short-term trips in a very impactful way to show me not just the need in Portugal, but even more importantly how I could go and meet that need through immersing myself in the Portuguese culture and language, and by serving the local churches I had connected with.

A change that has just happened in September is a move to the city of Coimbra



"I feel privileged that I can use these years of my twenties to serve the Lord in unevangelized Europe, I can't think of a better way to use the energy of my youth."

to serve there. I am involved with local church ministry and student ministry with the local GBU (Grupo Biblico Universitario). I have made this move at the end of three years in Vila Real and other cities like Chaves and Bragança in the same northern area of Portugal, where I have been serving local churches and church plants. It has been a great privilege to serve with these churches for these last years, and I am deeply thankful to all who have been supporting me, both in Northern Ireland and in Portugal, as I have completed this first definable period as a missionary in Portugal.

I trust, and would ask you to join me in praying, that the Lord will establish my steps and lead me in accordance with His will as I settle in Coimbra. I trust in the Lord's sovereign plan for how long, and in what specific ways, He wants me to continue to serve him in Portugal. My aim is always to be faithful in my life and in my doctrine, just as Paul exhorted Timothy

(1 Tim 4:16). I trust that if I am faithful in these ways, the Lord will keep me where he wants me to be and use me there. I think the most surprising thing as these three years comes to an end is that it has come around so quickly. It is amazing how quickly three years can pass, especially when you are busy in the Lord's work. I feel privileged that I can use these years of my twenties to serve the Lord in unevangelised Europe, I can't think of a better way to use the energy of my youth.

The last three years have brought challenges, but I have always found them to be outweighed by the joy of serving the Lord and the knowledge that the investment I am making is an eternal one, whilst the temporal frustrations, challenges and uncertainties will come and go. Please pray that for however longer the Lord keeps me in Portugal, that I will remain faithful and see more fruit borne for His kingdom.

JESUS IS THE WAY ON THE CAMINO:

Reaching pilgrims who are searching
on the Camino de Santiago in Spain

“My wife passed away two years ago. I walk the Camino to be with her and with God.” These words were from Duncan*, an Australian pilgrim who stayed at Casa Camino Antiguo (Ancient Way House), our Christian guesthouse in Basque Country on the renowned pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago in Spain.





Duncan was the first pilgrim to stay at the guesthouse which opened in April 2024, after six years of planning and prayer. He had just finished his first day of walking and was continuing another 818 kilometers, or 30 days of walking, onto the city of Santiago, where the Camino ends.

At the guesthouse, pilgrims can stop to stay the night, have a shower and be refreshed before continuing on their way. Our aim is to offer them a safe space and the warm hospitality of Jesus along their journey.

Pilgrims are just ordinary people walking the Camino, and though many simply walk to enjoy the beautiful Spanish landscape or as a break from life's busyness, others—like Duncan—walk for deeply personal reasons. Around 45% of pilgrims say they walk the Camino for religious or spiritual reasons, and many are searching for God.

Since April, we have welcomed over 150 pilgrims to Casa Camino Antiguo, men and women, young and old. Over half are Spanish and the rest come from all over the world - France, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, England, Brazil and Russia to name a few. Every encounter is different: sometimes we have an open personal conversation about spiritual things, other times they might not want to talk about faith at all; we might get to share Scripture together or they might just want to keep to themselves and rest quietly.

Sometimes we invite the pilgrims to share a meal with us. It might just be a friendly chat, a glass of water and a comfortable bed is all they need. However our interaction with pilgrims works out, we aim to be a God-glorifying presence and to show them the love of Jesus in a practical way.

As a team and with volunteers who have come to help at the guesthouse, we've have had opportunities to reach those who are searching, hear an atheist respond to Jesus in the gospels, pray with a priest, meet Christ-following hippies and send a few pilgrims along with a Bible in their backpack.

"we aim to be a God-glorifying presence and to show them the love of Jesus in a practical way."

When they arrive, each pilgrim has their credential (like a passport), stamped with our logo which has the words of Jesus above it from John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth and the life." Our prayer is that they leave not only with the literal words of Jesus stamped in their passport, but that God would impress His grace and mercy upon each one in some way.

The guesthouse is in the same building as where our small church plant meets. These ministries are not separate entities but make up a whole where we aim to reach out not only to pilgrims, but to be a visible gospel presence to locals in our town here in Basque Country.

We would appreciate your prayers that God may use Casa Camino Antiguo to guide people to Jesus the true Way.



Thoughts and reflections from the ECM Ireland Team!



Stephen Megrath

*Operations Manager
ECM Ireland office*

In 2022, I had come to a point in life where I could no longer ignore God's call to do something of more value with my working hours. God put all the pieces of the puzzle in place to guide me towards ECM Ireland so, I put my trust in God, took a step of faith and have not regretted it for a second.

I have been fascinated for many years by missionaries I have spoken to, supported and encouraged but I have to say that until I found out more about ECM, I was genuinely unaware of the lack of evangelical Christians in Europe and the great need there to share the Gospel message.

To see work as just an economic necessity is to miss so much of what it can, and should, add to your life, especially when you are doing something that assists the work being done by those who have followed the call of God on their lives and who serve in the field as missionaries. It is a privilege to be a small part of the work being done to grow God's Kingdom in Europe.

Europe needs missionaries, the mission organisations that facilitate their work, the supporters who fund the work and most of all Europe needs God!



Lourdes Williamson

*Finance Manager
ECM Ireland office*

As the Finance Manager for ECM Ireland, I like to think that I am a little part in this amazingly beautiful machine that starts with our missionaries answering the call of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to 'go and make disciples of all nations...' (Matt 28:19). They couldn't answer without the help of Churches, individuals and other organisations willing to support them prayerfully and financially.

My role fits between the two; being able to record donations, make payments and compile the information making it available to our missionaries on the field, our management team and faithful Council members. I also must keep up with regulations, and these are some of the usual tasks I keep up with on my day to day.

The most rewarding task that I do, is to let our missionaries know about new donations especially the ones responding to a specific need. This brings much encouragement and carries affirmation for the missionaries, as they are doing a job God called them to do and He is fulfilling his promise to be with them always. I can only feel thankful for the privilege of witnessing it all firsthand.

LEAVING A LEGACY



If you are willing to leave a gift to ECM in your will, there are three main ways to do so:

1. Residuary gift:

a share (or all) of what remains of the value of your estate once your family and friends have been dealt with. This has the advantage of staying the same over time and therefore your will won't need to change to keep up with inflation.

2. Pecuniary gift:

a specific amount of money.

3. Specific gift:

a named item such as a piece of art or jewellery.

If you want to leave a gift to ECM, or want to know more about doing so, please tick the appropriate box on the response form.

Thank you for investing in ongoing ministry in Europe!

GIVING TO ECM IRELAND

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

Please send me:

- ECM Life (three times per year) post email
 ECM's monthly prayer diary post email
 Eurolink (*ECM Ireland monthly prayer resource*) post email

Signature:

SINGLE GIFT DONATION

£5 £15 £30 £50 Other £

Euros Amount €

For use where most needed

For the Christmas Appeal

Towards the work of:

I enclose a cheque made payable to ECM Ireland

I do not require an acknowledgment.

You can also donate on line

www.ecmireland.org/give

GIFT AID DECLARATION

giftaid it

I wish to gift aid to ECM this and any gift I have given in the last four years, until further notice. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.

Full name:

Signature:

Date:

REGULAR GIVING

For use where most needed:

Towards the work of:

STANDING ORDER DETAILS

Bank name:

Bank address:

Postcode:

Account holder:

Account no:

Sort code: - -

Please deduct (amount in words) pounds

from my account on / /

Month **Quarter** **Year (tick one)** until further notice.

This standing order (tick as appropriate)...

Replaces

Does not replace an existing standing order to ECM

Pay this sum to: European Christian Mission

A/C: 40615008 Sort Code: 98 09 60

Ballymacoss Avenue, Lisburn BT28 2GX

Signature: **Date:**

For bank use only: Paying bank please ensure all backdated payments are made and the following reference number is quoted with all payments.

Reference No.

LEGACY GIVING

I have included ECM in my will.

I would like to consider including ECM in my will.

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I wish to gift aid to ECM this and any gift I have given in the last four years, until further notice. I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year.

Full name:

Signature: **Date:**



PRAYER POINTS

ECM Ireland is on the road in January 2025. We are running an evening called **Love Europe?** in the locations below and we would love to see you there – in the meantime please pray for the preparations:

- **Monday 20th January:**
Richhill Presbyterian, 19.30
- **Wednesday 22nd January:** Molesworth Presbyterian, 20.00
- **Saturday 25th January:**
Orangefield Presbyterian, 19.00

Our missionaries based in Ireland and the UK are gathering for their **Prayer Days from 29th November to 1st December** – pray for encouragement and spiritual refreshment as they meet in Athlone.



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