

# Message

Volume 72 | Issue 02 | 2024

# Post Christian?

MISSIONS IN THE SHADOW OF CHRISTENDOM

**Lights of Revival**

**From Alcoholism  
to Evangelism**

**Sneaking Past  
Watchful Dragons**



**General Editor:**

Alex Kocman

**Managing Editor:**

Katelyn Hawkins

**Creative Director:**

Christine Morales

**Graphic Designer:**

David Brandt

**Contributors:**

Melissa Baccarella

Judy Bowen

Parren Carnahan

Logan Howard

Elizabeth Kollmar

Matt L.

Stanley Leary

Liz Ortiz

Roland Pugh

Jeff Raymond

Cassie &amp; Jordan Timpy

Brian VanTimmeren

34-980 Adelaide St S.

London ON N6E 1R3

T: 519.690.1009

E: info@abwe.ca

abwe.ca

**WHO IS ABWE?**

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. Supported by a network of 400 like-minded churches, we are a global family of ministries, dedicated to fulfilling the Great Commission by multiplying leaders, churches, and missions movements among every people. Currently, more than 1,000 ABWE missionaries are reaching the lost in 85 countries through evangelism, discipleship, church planting, leadership development, and national partnerships.

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## Editorial

FROM THE PRESIDENT



# Shining Christ's Light in the Shadow of Christendom

BY DR. JOHN TAYLOR  
ABWE CANADA PRESIDENT

After having once been central and integral to Canadian culture and daily life, the majority of Canadians now consider religion to be unimportant in their daily lives. Canada has become a post-Christian, secular state.

Many of our missionaries serve on fields that are also considered to be post-Christian. ABWE US President Paul and Martha Davis recently visited one of these fields and witnessed a baptismal service that left an indelible mark on their hearts.

*"Imagine the scene: a young lady, fresh from the waters of baptism, shares her testimony. She spoke of her relentless quest for spiritual fulfillment, a journey that led her through the labyrinths of psychology, New Age philosophies, paganism—even to the dark alleys of Satanism. Yet, in each avenue explored, she found only emptiness, a void that no human wisdom or mystical experience could fill. Then she encountered the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Through her testimony, we witnessed the transformation that occurs when a sinner encounters the living Christ. The joy on her face radiated the hope she felt—a hope not found in the ideologies of this world, but in the person and work of her Saviour. Her beaming expression reminded Martha and me that, in a world that offers myriad paths to enlightenment, Christ alone is our wisdom, righteousness, and peace.*

*As we reflected on this baptismal service and the broader landscape of post-Christian culture, we sensed that our mission has never been more crucial. Though we may find Christianity suddenly marginalized where it once held sway, Christ's marching orders to his people have not changed. And remarkably, it's in these very dark places where Christian influence has seemingly faded that the light of Christ can once again shine brightest."*

In this issue, we're exploring the possibilities and opportunities for gospel proclamation in these post-Christian contexts. From bustling urban centers to remote, rural villages, these stories delve into our missionaries' unique challenges and triumphs labouring in these rocky soils. Our prayer is that you would embrace with us the call to faithfully steward the gospel—even in places where Christ has previously been known—boldly proclaiming the unchanging message of hope and salvation in a world desperately needing Christ's love.

Be inspired by these stories of faith and emboldened to engage effectively in the mission of reaching the post-Christian world for Jesus Christ. He is indeed the hope of the world, and through our faithful proclamation, his light will continue to illuminate the dark.

THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING THE MINISTRIES AND MISSIONARIES OF ABWE

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Residents of Alcalá de Henares, Spain, walk in a park.

Photo:  
Jeff Raymond

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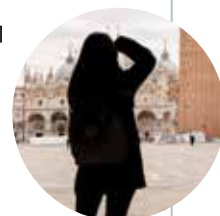


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# Connections

## Compassion in Action: Gospel Outreach in Israel in the Wake of Hamas' Attacks

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: ISRAEL

The horrific attacks of October 7, 2023, left Israelis devastated and reeling. On what would become the deadliest day in the history of the modern state of Israel, Israelis endured an onslaught of thousands of rockets launched against the nation while Hamas terrorists brutally invaded border communities near Gaza. Within a few hours, approximately 1,200 citizens had been killed and 250 taken hostage.

“The shock was unbearable . . . unbelievable,” recounted one Israeli pastor.

As the crisis grew, ABWE national partners and workers in the region evaluated how to assist their congregations and communities suddenly suffering widespread unemployment, evacuation, fear, and trauma. The needs increased as 360,000 men and women were called to active military duty, leaving many young families separated and churches without pastors or deacons.

Amid these devastating circumstances, ABWE's Israel and Middle East Compassion Fund assisted national partners in caring for their congregations.

“In one church plant, we offered food, childcare, and home maintenance for families whose husbands were away, whenever they needed it,” said Allen, an ABWE partner. “We donated grocery gift cards to people unable to

work because of the war. In one case, we helped a family whose car was damaged by a rocket, and we've helped with expenses for a young soldier from a believing family who lost both legs in an explosion.”

Even as local churches ministered to their own members as the body of Christ, they looked outward to serve the broader population.

“We asked each other, ‘How can we do outreach; how can we serve through relief work?’” continued Allen.

Partnering with like-minded organizations, they provided food and school supplies for some of the 200,000 civilians evacuated from regions bordering Gaza and Lebanon and supported evangelistic media productions. When reservists reported a lack of basic supplies, churches purchased coats, toiletries, and watches for the units of believing soldiers, upholding their efforts to share the gospel with those searching for hope in the chaos of combat.

“Meeting physical needs gives us the ability to speak into people's lives, and that starts a relationship that allows us

to share more with them,” explained ABWE partner Beth. “It's breaking down barriers to the gospel.”

Despite its history as the land of the Bible, Israel remains largely unreached with the biblical gospel by missiological standards. Evangelical believers comprise only 0.7 percent of the population and often face hostility or opposition. As many Israelis now realize that they cannot fully rely on their national security system, ABWE partners pray that the current situation will become a spiritual wake-up call.

“Since that awful day, most of the people are willing to hear and speak about spiritual matters,” wrote one national pastor. “We are praying for wisdom to use each opportunity to present the gospel with the hope of seeing many more people coming to saving knowledge [of] Christ Jesus.”

Allen added: “Pray with us that the truth of the Messiah will penetrate the hearts of both Israelis and Palestinians.” ■

*Editor's Note: Names have been changed for security.*



Photo: ABWE partner

# Doing ‘Reel’ Evangelism

In a setting where faith is all but forgotten, one couple is finding fruit through film.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: AUSTRALIA

## “Oh, you like movies?”

Previously disengaged from the dinner conversation, Angus’ attention piqued when ABWE missionary Russ Matthews leaned across the table and mentioned his work writing film reviews. As the conversation shifted to films and directors, Russ invited Angus, a big man with a bigger personality, to accompany him to a movie. This launched a series of meetings and a friendship between the men.

“We had lunch, and we ended up talking about all the aspects in the movie that pointed back to God and spirituality and how this impacted his life,” Russ shared.

Angus, with growing interest, later commented to Russ, “I’m not a Christian yet, but I really like getting together with you.”

The unique ability of film to induce spiritual conversations forms the basis of Australian evangelistic ministry Reel Dialogue. Through establishing groups that gather to watch and discuss movies, Russ, his wife Cathy, and their ministry partners present biblical truth as it relates to themes in each film.

“Everyone seems to have that common thread of enjoying movies to some degree,” Russ commented. “Our goal is

to get people to a deeper conversation, putting the film through the lens of faith. Film gets me to spiritual conversations faster than anything else I’ve ever experienced.”

In addition to group events, Russ hosts a podcast called The Watchlist and writes biblically based film reviews for publications throughout Australia. After a decade of reviewing films, Russ has earned a position on the press list, placing him as the only believer in a community of film critics.

“We’ve seen numerous groups start and people introduced to the Bible through Reel Dialogue,” he conveyed.

Russ and Cathy have found building relationships to be essential for sharing the gospel in post-Christian Australia. Although Australia has a highly educated, diverse culture, biblical literacy remains low. Yet statistics indicate that over 50 percent of Australians are willing to discuss spiritual matters.

“If you’re willing to meet people where they are and look at this as a relationship, many people will listen to the gospel,” he continued.

Russ and Cathy have served 18 years with Australian churches and ministries capitalizing on this concept. Third Space, founded in 2019, engages people



Russ and Cathy Matthews attend a film premiere.

with the gospel through special interest groups. City Bible Forum focuses on the workplace, training Christians to prayerfully reach their coworkers and offering lunch-hour Bible studies and public forums in corporations across Australia.

Stuart, a senior banking professional admitting to living for pleasure and a lavish lifestyle, attended a City Bible Forum event after conversations with his business partner left him pondering the importance of faith. Realizing his life was “soulless,” he began meeting with a team of Christian executives and submitted his life to Christ.

“Right now, over 300 people are in regular Bible studies,” reported Russ. “Our goal is to help them come to faith in Christ and join good Bible-believing churches in their community. We’re meeting people where they are.” ■

*Editor’s Note: Angus’ name has been changed for privacy.*

Background: Getty Images; Above: Russ Matthews



**KAYLA MEIER**  
Romania

“I had no idea what to expect when two ABWE teammates, Landon and Chelsea Stapleton, and I started a missional community group to disciple college students. Yet in the eight months our group has been meeting, we have seen our students willing to discuss their faith, share personal struggles, and ask for prayer. New people are joining us each week, and three of the students were recently baptized in our church!”



**RON DAVIS**  
Poland

“By partnering with displaced evangelical refugees from Ukraine, we have the unique opportunity to plant churches and train effective leaders in a country that is 0.03 percent evangelical. Our ABWE Poland team, Ukrainian pastor Maksym Sliazin, and national partners from Fourth Baptist Church in Gdansk have planted a new church in Tczew. Each week, a team of volunteers from Fourth Baptist travels to Tczew to hold church services and minister to the people of this city. Progress has been slow, but we have begun to see an interest in the Thursday night Bible studies.”



Eugene’s life changed after hearing the gospel for the first time at an ABWE medical clinic.

Photo: Stanley Leary

## From Alcoholism to Evangelism: the Impact of Medical Missions

Short-term medical teams operate with local churches to heal communities in Eastern Europe and beyond.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS  
LOCATION: MOLDOVA

### “My life changed after the arrival of American doctors.”

Eugene’s medical concerns were just the start of his troubles. Addicted to alcohol and tobacco, he often stayed out drinking late into the night. Each time he didn’t return home, his mother would anxiously enquire about his whereabouts.

When Eugene heard that a team of American doctors would be hosting a one-day clinic near his village in Moldova, he decided to attend. The ABWE medical staff not only treated his illness but shared the gospel with him. Eugene immediately repented of his sins and prayed with the doctor to place his faith in Christ.

“Everything in my life changed after that,” Eugene recounted. “I became a

different person and began to evangelize, began to preach.”

Eugene’s radical transformation amazed his mother, and she too trusted Christ.

### Opening Closed Doors

“Healthcare ministry has a tremendous ability to bring contact with people,” said ABWE International Director of Healthcare Ministries Development Jack Sorg, M.D. “Around the world, the problem is closed doors. But with healthcare ministry, we’re able to draw people out of their homes [and] be able to present the gospel in that setting, and then follow up with them.”

For over 25 years, Jack has led short-term medical missions trips throughout Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Europe—including repeated trips to

Moldova. His ministry model centers on assisting local, national-run churches with evangelism and church planting efforts by leveraging the ability of medical teams to make connections and increase credibility within a community.

“Oftentimes the church ministry—and especially a new church plant—is looked at suspiciously by people in the community,” explained Jack. “But providing a service, even a one-day urgent care clinic, really shows that the church is concerned about them and desires to help and serve them.”

Vasiliy Kaletnik, a Moldovan church planter, has partnered extensively with ABWE’s Launch Point medical teams to start and develop new church ministries.

“In the beginning, my mission there was hard,” shared Vasiliy. “When I heard about the medical team, I invited them to Moldova. And by [using the] team, we opened the door for people to get the gospel because we gave medicine free, glasses free, and we reached many people, and we [quickly] planted a church.”

Although response to the gospel is typically slow in the rural villages of this former Soviet-dominated nation, recent medical trips have witnessed great interest in the gospel.

The ABWE team serving with Vasiliy in October 2023 conducted a clinic in one church plant consisting of only 11

members. “In the [medical] ministry itself, we saw 11 professions of faith, which essentially would double the size of that church,” said Jack.

Over the course of the week, the team saw 341 patients in three villages, with an astounding 40 professions of faith. Following the clinics, the local church in each village began the essential work of follow up and discipleship for the new believers.

As God continues to open doors for the gospel, Jack highlights the effectiveness of these small but strategic teams of American medical professionals serving in tandem with local believers. Each medical team includes three to six Americans, including at least two doctors and a pharmacist or nurse to dispense prescribed medications. All serve alongside nationals who take patient histories and assist in sharing the gospel.

“We need more help,” Jack conveyed. “We want to start more of these kinds of teams. There are many opportunities opening to us around the world . . . and for the amount of time and investment, we can have a huge impact.” ■

Get involved in short-term medical missions trips. Visit [abwe.ca/ministry\\_focus/healthcare/](https://abwe.ca/ministry_focus/healthcare/).



Moldovan national partner Alexander Viciuc shares the gospel with a patient at a medical clinic.

Photo: Stanley Leary



**STEVE & BECKY DYE**  
Germany

“Our international church in Berlin started a leadership development cohort for men whom we as elders pinpointed as those who possess Christlike character and competencies necessary to serve as elders in the future. Over the course of the year, we met together and went through a seminary-level course called Theology of Ministry. The Lord has already begun to use several of these men in various ministry roles, both in our church and in our church plant in a neighbouring city.”



**ALLEN & MELISSA BATTs**  
Canada

“Every Saturday in the summer, we invite the neighbours in our apartment building over for ‘open table’: coffee and snacks on our patio while our kids play in the yard. This predictable pattern of simply welcoming people into our home has opened doors for us to have gospel conversations and build deeper relationships with several neighbours. One couple views our kids as their own grandkids and has become dear to us!”

# Seeking Asylum in the Savior

Divine providence leads a Muslim to the light at the very crossroad of religious friction.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

LOCATION: THE BALKANS

“Follow me, and don’t be afraid,” beckoned a man encompassed in light.

Rashid startled awake, sensing that the vivid apparition in his dream had been Jesus. As a devout Muslim in a strict Islamic nation, he pondered this strange appearance until his troubled nights brought a second dream of Jesus. This time, Rashid confided in a friend, only to be met with ridicule.

Undaunted, Rashid began diligently studying the Qur’an, finding Jesus described as a highly esteemed prophet. The deeper Rashid studied the Qur’an, however, the more contradictions he found within its text, and he began to doubt his Islamic faith.

With growing conviction that Islam was not the true path, Rashid announced to his parents that he desired to pursue Christianity. Enraged, Rashid’s father beat him, and, as the call to prayer reverberated through the city, forced him to recite Islamic prayers. Rashid’s wife soon divorced him. When her family threatened to kidnap and kill him for his interest in the Bible, he knew he needed to flee.

Quickly researching nations granting asylum for religious persecution, he boarded a plane for a country in the Balkans and surrendered himself to the authorities upon arrival. His first task at the refugee centre was to search for someone who could answer his questions about Jesus. An online search revealed an international church planted by ABWE workers, whom he contacted to arrange a meeting.

The church leaders initially viewed Rashid’s message with caution. Located along the historical faultline between Islam and Christendom, believers in the Balkans still feel the rum-

blings of religious tension. Two ABWE workers and a national pastor prayerfully agreed to talk with him.

“Whatever doubts or suspicions we had about his intentions were quickly eclipsed by Rashid’s great joy and genuine interest,” said Blake, an ABWE worker.

As Rashid plied the church leaders with questions, his smile grew larger with each gospel statement.

“Jesus died . . . for my sins. . . . He is alive now in heaven . . . yes!” he exclaimed.

Bowing his head, Rashid repented and placed his faith in the Saviour for whom he had already suffered. As they rejoiced together, the men asked Rashid how they could help him.

He responded immediately, “I need to be baptized! Can you help me with that?”

God’s plan for Rashid soon became yet more apparent. While visiting the Middle East in 2023, the wife of one of the ABWE workers had sensed the Lord leading her to get an Arabic Bible, despite her inability to read it. They now presented it to Rashid, who received it with joy, reverently embracing it to his chest.

“God graciously used our little church as a lighthouse for someone seeking Jesus,” concluded Blake, “and there is rejoicing in heaven as another sinner has entered the family of God.” ■

*Editor’s Note: Names have been changed for security.*



# Planning and Building for the Kingdom

BY: MATT L.

**M**artin, a Togolese Muslim, stands out from his neighbours for one reason—he has a good education. In addition to his labour farming his land on the outskirts of Mango, a small city in the savannah region of northern Togo, Martin’s education affords him opportunities to teach French and work as a translator. I was introduced to Martin when he was hired as my translator for the construction of the second floor of Hope Radio, ABWE’s ministry broadcasting gospel-centred teaching and music to unreached towns and villages throughout northern Togo. Hope Radio was bursting at the seams in a single-level building.

Over the next three months, Martin and I worked side by side supervising workers to construct a much-needed addition. As our relationship grew, our discussion topics deepened from work to family to redemptive conversations. Although Martin is a devout Muslim, he is open to seeking truth. When we completed construction and I prepared to return to the US, I gave Martin a French Bible, which he received gratefully. With conviction that he was still lost in the error of his beliefs, I initiated a long-distance Bible study with him. Using ABWE’s evangelistic resource “The Story of Hope” as a guide, we communicated via text messages. I have visited Martin on two return trips to Togo, and our long-distance study has now progressed to discussing the deity of Jesus from John’s gospel.

With expanded facilities, Hope Radio has been able to impact even more lives, producing biblical programming and recording Scripture in tribal languages to penetrate remote villages with the gospel. Facilities often serve as launch points for missionaries to reach their communities. Not only are missions construction and architectural design teams integral to building these types of facilities, but the construction process presents unique opportunities for sharing Christ with those with whom we work.

Many missionaries and missions organizations do not know where to turn with their facility needs. This void is the impetus behind a first-of-its-kind missions conference focused on bringing together gospel-centric organizations, churches, and individuals to promote the design and construction of ministry facilities around the world. ■



Matt L. serves as the assistant director of ABWE Construction.

*Editor’s Note: Martin’s name has been changed for security.*

Photos: Matt L.



## The Missions Construction Conference (MC2) is being built for three primary goals:

### EDIFY

We will provide a forum for design- and construction-focused missions groups to collaborate and encourage one another professionally in the field of missions construction.

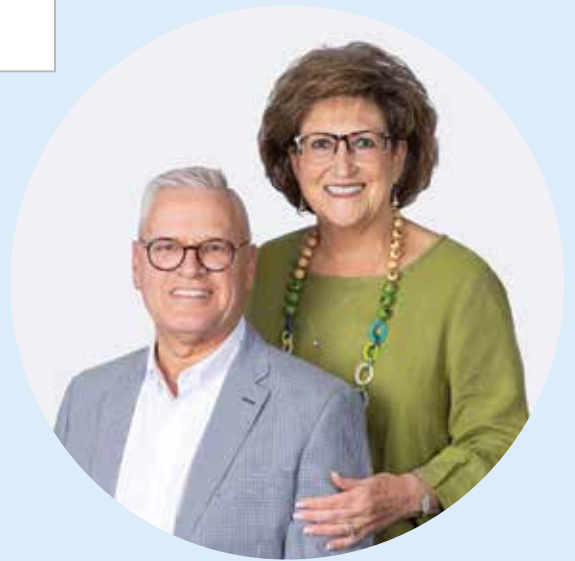
### EQUIP

We will invite missions-focused individuals and organizations with construction needs who do not currently have a construction program to join us for networking and training.

### ENGAGE

We will encourage all churches, business leaders, and individuals interested in using construction in ministry to join us. If you are involved or interested in the vital role of missions construction in furthering gospel impact, please visit [missionsconstruction.org](https://missionsconstruction.org) for more information or to sign up to receive updates.





# David and Debbie Woodard

David and Debbie Woodard recount the Lord's faithfulness after a career of church revitalization in England.

**A**s David and Debbie Woodard discovered, revitalizing dying churches can be a powerful means for reaching post-Christian nations. Throughout 22 years as missionaries in England, the Woodards dedicated themselves to restoring and planting churches. The Lord then expanded their ministry as David was appointed ABWE's regional director for Western Europe, and again as they returned to the US to serve consecutively as executive director for Europe and the Middle East/North Africa, vice president of Global Operations, and chief operating officer.

David and Debbie's service to the ABWE missionary family led them to visit 70 countries before retiring in 2023 after 35 years of faithful missions ministry.

**Q: How did your journey to missions begin?**

When we were about 16 years old, two ladies preparing to serve in France spoke to the youth group we both attended about missions. They challenged us to be willing to give God first choice in our lives: to be willing to go wherever and do whatever the Lord called us to. We both surrendered to the Lord and thought that he would call us overseas young, but we never had peace about it.

In our early 30s, David had a thriving ministry as an associate pastor, and we both taught at a Christian school. We had two children and had just built a new house. During a missions conference, we began praying that the Lord would call some of our students to the mission field, but as we prayed for them, the Lord put it on our hearts to go then ourselves.

**Q: How did you serve churches throughout your career in England?**

We started out in church restoration, going into very old historic Baptist churches in England in danger of closing and starting the process of revitalizing them. We moved around the country restoring two existing churches and planting two new churches throughout our 22 years in England.

**Q: One of the churches you restored was originally started through the ministry of well-known preacher Charles Spurgeon. What was the history of that church, and how did you revitalize it?**

The first church we restored was started in the 1800s by two of Charles Spurgeon's students sent out from the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London to plant a village church in Chipping Sodbury. For the 60 years prior to our arrival, the church had no full-time pastor. A rota-

tion of circuit-riding preachers led Sunday services, traveling first on horses and then by bicycle and car as the years progressed. Attendance decreased until only a faithful handful of people in their 80s remained.

When we agreed to restore that church, and others like it, we worked with the members left in the church to find out the specific challenges and determine the path forward. We looked at all aspects of the church—like facilities, church constitution, hymn book, and the order of service—and wrote a contract for what we were going to change. Then, we planned four big evangelistic events during the year and four smaller evangelistic events. When the congregation grew large enough, we brought in a young British couple that we would mentor. We gradually turned that ministry over to them and then moved on to a new church. This strategy worked really well for us.

**Q: How did your work in church restoration differ from church planting?**

There are three great advantages of church restoration over church planting. First, you start with a core group of people who have been in that church, many of them for decades, and have paid the price to keep that church open. Second, you already have a church

building and property. Third, you gain instant credibility as the leader of a church that was once established in the community.

**Q: What is a highlight from your ministry in England?**

In our church restoration at Great Whyte Baptist Church, we saw such hope and transformation of people's lives.

We had one young man come to Christ after he saw his coworker, a friend of ours named Daniel, reading a book every day at lunch. When he found out it was the Bible, he asked Daniel to start reading it aloud. Daniel invited him to the Christianity Explored ministry we had begun at our church using Rico Tice's video series. We would invite non-Christians to a midweek service with a meal and an evangelistic film, with discussion afterward.

One of the videos talks about how churches in England were built with stained-glass windows so the people who were illiterate at that time could learn Bible stories through the illustrations. When this young man heard that history, he said, "I've never been in a church, and my parents and grandparents never went to church. But every day

I see Jesus through my coworker. He is my stained-glass window." We thought that was the coolest thing ever.

**Q: What are the challenges and blessings of serving in a post-Christian nation?**

In England, it has been many generations since there was any real Christian influence permeating the culture. You rarely see a Bible, and people haven't heard of biblical figures like Adam and Eve. When you're working with a society that has no background in Christianity, you have to re-gear your thinking and your speech for people who have no reference point for the language we would use in church.

Working in a post-Christian society requires slowing down, not expecting that people will get saved or discipled very quickly. You have to invest your life with them, putting time into relationships to earn the right to share about Jesus. People usually need to feel that you really care about them before they will respond to the gospel.

One of the blessings is that you're making such a difference in society. It's a blessing to share the gospel with current generations who have never heard it before and to see the Holy Spirit work in their lives.

**Q: How did serving in Europe prepare you for ministry in the US?**

Coming from a small southern town, we had a very narrow view of Christendom. Serving overseas gave us a better understanding that the world-wide church is so much bigger than what we were used to.

Our experiences around the world also helped us to counsel, direct, and recruit new missionaries. Because we had learned many different cultures, we could help others figure out the best fit for their future ministry. ■

David and Debbie (fifth and sixth from left) visit Togo during David's tenure as vice president of Global Operations.



Photo: Liz Ortiz



Hear more of David and Debbie's story of faithful service in England. Tune in to the Cloud of Witnesses podcast to be inspired, challenged, and encouraged through the lives of remarkable individuals who have played significant roles in advancing Christ's kingdom throughout the century-long history of ABWE.

Listen now at  
[cloudofwitnessespodcast.com](http://cloudofwitnessespodcast.com).



# GREAT THINGS HE HATH DONE

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## 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Many of us know the rich, old hymn “To God Be the Glory” by heart—“To God be the glory, Great things he hath done, So loved he the world that he gave us his Son . . .” and on it goes.

In Christ, we have all we need. Yet the astonishing thing Scripture tells us is that, through Christ, God gives us everything else we need too (Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 3:21, Ephesians 1:3, 2 Peter 1:3).

We see this firsthand every day in Christ’s mission as we constantly prove Hudson Taylor’s maxim: “God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supply.” This year, we saw sustained generosity from the body of Christ at all-time highs as ordinary believers gave sacrificially to advance the gospel, plant churches, and train leaders among the nations.

So, in light of the abundant, all-supplying grace of the Lord, join us in giving God the glory—great things he has done!

**The numbers on the next two pages reflect the combined ministry of ABWE US and ABWE Canada.**

### God’s Global Work

# 959

## ABWE Workers Reaching 85 Nations



### Workers by Category

|            |           |            |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| <b>839</b> | <b>48</b> | <b>72</b>  |
| Long-Term  | Mid-Term  | Short-Term |



### Distribution of Workers

|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>16%</b> Africa     | <b>11%</b> N. America                             |
| <b>18%</b> Asia       | <b>21%</b> Supporting<br>International<br>Workers |
| <b>18%</b> Europe     |   |
| <b>3%</b> Oceania     |   |
| <b>13%</b> S. America |   |

Background: Getty Images; Above: Roland Pugh; Below: Timothy and Leandra Hawes



# 696

Baptisms in churches where missionaries serve as their primary ministry



# 590

Church plants initiated, strengthened, and established



# 780

Translation projects initiated or completed



# 180,192

People given healthcare



# 40

New sending churches

Clockwise from top left: ABWE personnel, Roland Pugh, Cassie Timpy, Brian VanTimmeren, Jordan Timpy

# GREAT THINGS HE HATH DONE

## God's Financial Provision

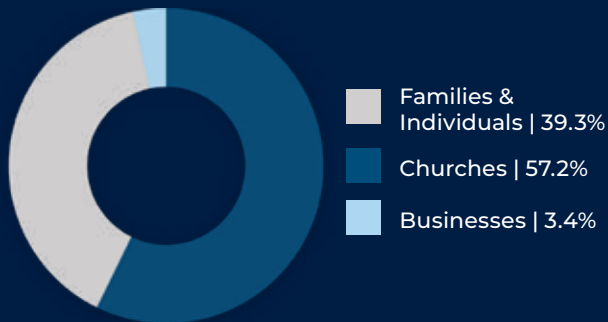
### 2023 Financial Summary

| FUNDING SOURCES      | AMOUNT IN 2023      | % CHANGE FROM 2022 |
|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Contributions        | \$3,805,942 (93.2%) | + 3.0%             |
| Other Sources*       | \$278,614 (6.8%)    | - 1.0%             |
| <b>TOTAL FUNDING</b> | <b>\$4,084,556</b>  | <b>+ 2.7%</b>      |

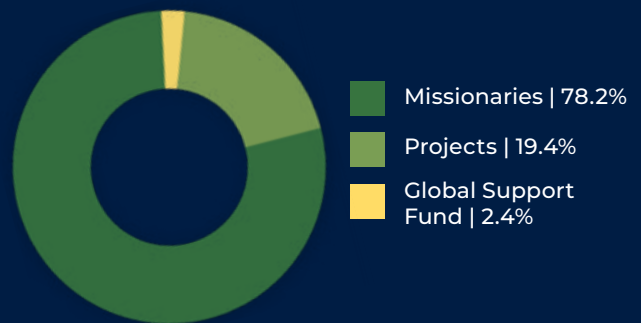
| EXPENSES                             | AMOUNT / %          | % CHANGE FROM 2022 |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Missionary Support                   | \$3,197,411 (76.9%) | + 11.5%            |
| Ministry Projects                    | \$509,817 (12.3%)   | - 6.3%             |
| Administrative & Missionary Services | \$451,260 (10.9%)   | + 11.5%            |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>                | <b>\$4,158,487</b>  | <b>+ 8.9%</b>      |

\* Other Sources includes investment returns, publications, etc.

### Who Supports ABWE Canada?



### What Did They Support?





## ABWE Canada Missionaries

*Supporting ABWE Canada's Missionary Family*

**\$3,145,399 GIVEN IN 2023**

[abwe.ca/missionaries](http://abwe.ca/missionaries)



## Ongoing Ministry Projects & Partners

**\$466,359 GIVEN IN 2023**

[abwe.ca/projects](http://abwe.ca/projects)



## Ukraine Crisis Fund

*Helping Churches actively ministering during the wartime*

**\$73,220 GIVEN IN 2023**

[abwe.ca/ukraine-crisis-fund](http://abwe.ca/ukraine-crisis-fund)



## Israel & Middle East Compassion Fund

*Giving Gospel Hope to Those in Crisis*

**\$16,988 GIVEN IN 2023**

[abwe.ca/middleeast](http://abwe.ca/middleeast)



## Good Soil Annual Project

*Providing resources and training specifically for a Canadian audience*

**\$31,320 GIVEN IN 2023**

[abwe.ca/good-soil](http://abwe.ca/good-soil)



## Global Support Fund

*Helping to provide administrative support to our missionaries*

**\$72,656 GIVEN IN 2023**

[abwe.ca/give-now/](http://abwe.ca/give-now/)

Clockwise from top left: ABWE personnel, Jordan Timpy, ABWE personnel, Judy Bowen, Getty Images, Getty Images

# Lights of Revival

Transformed lives in Spain bear witness that Christ is building his church in all nations, not least of all in Europe.

BY: KATELYN HAWKINS

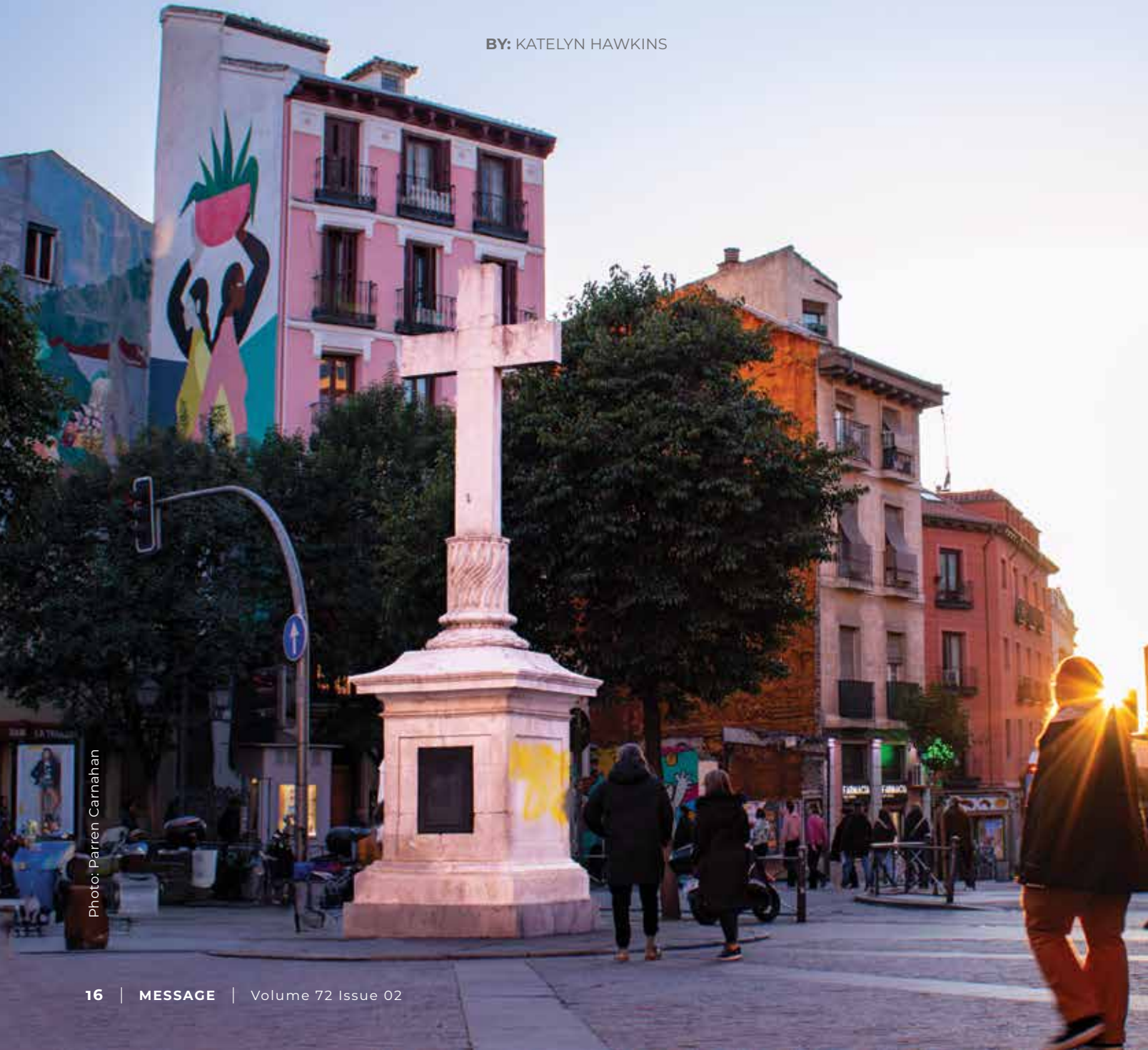


Photo: Parren Carmahan



## “My family was completely broken when I was young, but God has done many miracles, and he has saved and redeemed our family in a very extraordinary way.”

Pastor Miguel Ángel Pozo

The postman's hand paused over the radio dial. A man's voice cut through the static, interrupting his scan for entertainment while cleaning his house. The message came clearly over the airwaves: “You must be born again!”

The year was 1956. The fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco dominated life in Spain, consolidating power through brutality and collusion with the Catholic Church. When Protestants were forbidden from evangelizing within Spanish borders, the Voice of Tangier broadcast the hope of the gospel by radio from northern Morocco into Europe.

*This is the true gospel*, the postman marvelled as he stood listening. At the end of the transmission, he bowed his head and placed his faith in Christ.

Immediately burdened for his neighbours in small-town Béjar, he began delivering biblical truth with the daily mail. He gathered new believers into his home for a Bible study led by two Argentinian missionaries operating covertly in Spain. His actions quickly attracted

notice; soon after the group's inception, Franco's secret police raided the Bible study, incarcerating the Argentinians and recording the personal information of all in attendance. Despite the repercussions, the postman remained committed to establishing others in the faith—including his own family.

Three decades later, the postman's adult daughter moved next to the Pozo family, who proved disruptive. The policeman husband, a drunk, was violently abusive toward his wife and young sons. Witnessing the family's crisis, the postman's daughter shared the gospel with the wife and invited her to the small evangelical church in Béjar—now legal under Spain's democratic government. She received Christ, and later, so did her husband and three sons. The boys grew up in the church, thus extending the spiritual legacy of the postman to future generations of the Pozo family.

“My family was completely broken when I was young,” shared Miguel Ángel, the second Pozo son and ABWE Live Global national partner, “but God



Pastor Miguel Ángel Pozo

**Inset:**  
Missionaries Rich and Cindy Brown

Above: Elizabeth Kollmar

has done many miracles, and he has saved and redeemed our family in a very extraordinary way.”

For Miguel Ángel, however, the journey to redemption was only beginning. Distancing himself from the church as a young adult, he followed the influences of radical politics and reckless friends, often partying late into the night on Saturday only to awaken a few hours later to appear presentable for church Sunday morning.

“I wanted to have the best of both worlds, but the truth is that I had the worst of both worlds,” he reflected.

When poor choices led to losing his university scholarship and his housing, he visited his older brother, David, at SEFOVAN, the evangelical seminary in Madrid. Feeling that he had exhausted all other options, Miguel Ángel also decided to enrol at SEFOVAN—where God once again changed the trajectory of his life.

“From the moment I went to seminary, I began studying the Bible, and it changed absolutely everything,” he recalled. “And then I remembered the call that God had given me years before, and I wanted to serve him.”

### **A Missionary’s Prayer Answered**

Miguel Ángel’s growing faith in Christ caught the attention of one of his professors, then-ABWE missionary Ken Muckle, who pointed him out to fellow ABWE missionary Rich Brown. Rich had been praying for God to send a godly Spanish leader to serve alongside him in a church plant he had established in 2003 to reach one of the many cities in the greater Madrid metropolitan area lacking an evangelical presence.

Partnership with national pastors has proven to be crucial for effective church planting, not only to ensure the longevity of a ministry after the missionaries are gone, but to connect with Spaniards who, due to cultural traditions of Catholicism, often need to witness firsthand how a Spanish identity and evangelical faith can be compatible.

“We were praying, ‘God, give us a good servant—someone who wants to serve the Lord,’” Rich said. “That was our big requirement. And God answered our prayer.”

Miguel Ángel and his wife, Rebeca, began working with Rich and Cindy Brown at Alcalá de Henares Evangelical Baptist Church in 2013, beginning



**“We were praying, ‘God, give us a good servant—someone who wants to serve the Lord.’ That was our big requirement. And God answered our prayer.”**

Rich Brown

a process of intentional discipleship and mentorship. The church officially installed Miguel Ángel as pastor in November 2020. Under his leadership, the congregation has grown both in attendance and in focus to train members for ministry.

Meanwhile, God's providence led Miguel Ángel's brother, David, to partner with ABWE church planters in a different location. In his early 20s, David had been studying business and economics at a secular university when he began to question the purpose of his life. *Why do I want to spend my life working for a company?* he wondered. *Is it just to make money?* Realizing that God was directing him to invest in eternal pursuits, he transferred to SEFOVAN seminary, where he developed a friendship with his professor of Christian living, ABWE missionary Roy Jones. Roy, like Rich and

Ken, taught at the seminary to equip Spanish believers to reach and disciple their nation.

Years later, David and his wife, Kimberly, grew increasingly frustrated: their church did not teach the biblical gospel, and they had few other options in their region.

"Just at that moment, Roy called us and told us, 'We are looking for a Spanish family to come and help us open a church in Torres de la Alameda,'" David said. "It was like an answer from God to our prayers."

In 2013, David, Roy, and two other families joined together to form a small congregation. Gradually, people from the town began attending, and membership swelled to around 40. When COVID restrictions limited attendance in 2020, the church leadership began not only streaming church services but also organizing online children's and

youth events for the community—and when restrictions lifted, many families who had joined online began attending in person.

"We still have a great need," said Roy. "In this area where we live in Torres de la Alameda, there are six or seven towns that have no gospel witness at all, not of any kind. . . . So we're praying for more labourers."

### Cathedrals Without Christ

In Spain, a landscape punctuated by soaring cathedral spires, centuries-old bell towers, and ornate cupolas resplendent in the Mediterranean sun conceals a spiritual reality obscured by shadows. As in much of modern Europe, the religious fervour of Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and even the Protestant Reformation has abated to leave current generations severed from the light of biblical truth.

**Below:** (From left) David and Kimberly Pozo join ABWE missionaries Roy and Nancy Jones and two Spanish couples to plant a church in Torres de la Alameda.

**Inset:** Congregants arrive at the Torre Fuerte church plant in Torres de la Alameda.



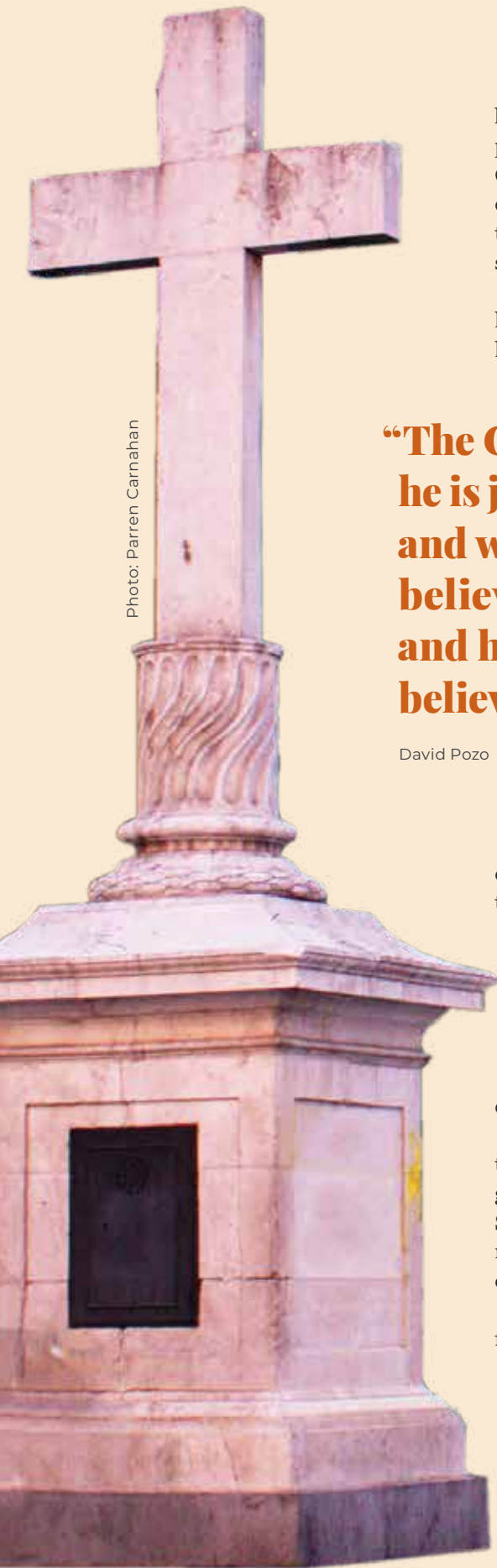


Photo: Parren Carnahan

“Many European countries today have less than one percent of their population professing to be evangelical Christian,” explained Jeff D., ABWE executive director for Europe. “This statistic is similar to many countries considered unreached.”

Even among the European populations in which vestiges of biblical literacy remain and the percentage

The varied religious traditions present unique challenges. “The Catholic believes he is already saved, that he is justified because he fulfils the sacraments and was baptized and confirmed as a child. He believes that you have nothing to teach him, and he doesn’t need anything. And the atheist believes that everything you teach him is a lie,” added David. He highlights cultural

**“The Catholic believes he is already saved, that he is justified because he fulfils the sacraments and was baptized and confirmed as a child. He believes that you have nothing to teach him, and he doesn’t need anything. And the atheist believes that everything you teach him is a lie.”**

David Pozo

of evangelical believers hovers near two percent (generally considered the missiological threshold by which a people group is considered “reached”), these believers remain too few to create a self-sustaining movement to reach and disciple the rest of their nation—Christ’s command in the Great Commission.

Despite the accessibility and relative affluence of Europe, barriers to the gospel abound. Among other nations, Spain is often deemed “the graveyard of missionaries” due to the low reception of the gospel message.

“Culturally, in Spain, we have gone from being a Roman Catholic society, which could not accept evangelicals, to a very secularized society in which we think we have already tried Christianity and it hasn’t worked,” explained Miguel Ángel. “[T]he reality is that we, as a nation, have never tried [evangelical] Christianity.”

pride and self-sufficiency as additional obstacles, quoting the proverb, “In Spain, we don’t have one king; we have 47 million.”

### **Taking Evangelism and Discipleship From Spanish Towns to TikTok**

With many Spaniards living without knowledge of the gospel, ABWE missionaries and national partners focus on church planting to reach and disciple local communities. According to research firm Decision, 92 percent of Spanish towns—representing more than 10 million people—have no evangelical church.

National pastor Federico (“Fede”) Álvarez and his wife, Lucía Halouzкова, aspire to plant churches throughout the province of Guadalajara.

Lucía, born in Czechoslovakia to an atheistic, communist family characterized by violence and abandonment,

immigrated to Spain at age 13, where she trusted in Christ after hearing the gospel from a German missionary.

“I was well-acquainted with a life without God, and a life with God, and so I always knew that I would work in the church to evangelize,” she shared. “I wanted to evangelize in towns because almost nobody in towns knows the gospel.”

Meanwhile, Fede, from the Spanish-owned Canary Islands, sensed a burden to leave the comfort of his home, job, and church to attend seminary and pursue full-time ministry. He did just that, and Fede and Lucía now lead a church plant in Cabanillas del Campo with ABWE missionaries Chris and Rosalie Duryee.

Fede, Lucía, and the Duryees have seen slow progress in their small congregation. A young man Fede was discipling recently gave his life to the Lord and resolved to put his life in order. Soon after, his cohabiting girlfriend also trusted in Christ, and they married.

“I can see God working. God has his time and manner, and something is going to happen. It’s an encouragement to continue sharing the gospel,” said Fede.

New church plants not only bring a gospel presence to their communities

but also fill a vital need for discipleship. ABWE missionaries Caleb and Krystie Hague have noted a distinctive trend in Spain in which many people in the country are converting to Christianity through online resources yet lack a local church for continued support and guidance.

One such young man named Loren, a self-help video creator on TikTok, was scrolling through the video app when he connected with a man in Guatemala who shared the gospel with him online.

“What you really need is Christ,” the TikToker told him.

As they read Isaiah 40 together, Loren understood that Christ died for him, and he trusted in Christ for salvation.

He immediately knew that he needed to find an evangelical church. A few weeks later, in July 2023, Loren was walking through an alley and considering how he might find such a congregation when he glanced up and spotted a sign for the Torres de la Alameda church plant.

Providentially, the Hagues had posted the sign just a few days prior in preparation for the church’s arrival in that building.

Missionaries Caleb Hague and Roy Jones began discipling Loren. The

**“I can see God working. God has his time and manner, and something is going to happen. It’s an encouragement to continue sharing the gospel.”**

Pastor Federico Álvarez

**Below:** Federico Álvarez and Lucía Halouzkova lead worship at their church plant in Cabanillas del Campo.

**Inset:** Missionaries Chris and Rosalie Duryee



young man gave up drugs and tobacco and now leverages his platform on TikTok to share his testimony with others seeking fulfillment.

“Loren is the first completely unchurched new believer to attend the Torres church plant,” said Caleb. “We are praying that other Spaniards will come to Christ through contacts from the church.”

### Shining Lights in the Community

ABWE missionaries and national partners encourage their congregations to live faithfully among their neighbours and look for creative avenues to establish themselves as gospel lights in the community—a goal they model well.

Missionaries Adam and Emily Byerly opened Brilla Café in December 2021 to connect with a broad range of people in Alcalá de Henares. Their coffee shop, serving locally roasted espresso-based drinks and light breakfast fare, has quickly become a valued establishment in the community, drawing over 100 patrons daily.

Some customers have become regulars, chatting over the counter about their lives and families while Adam, Emily, or their staff prepares their order. To further cultivate gospel opportunities, the Byerlys and their teammates repurpose the café’s intimate, welcoming seating area to host five English classes weekly.

In these classes, English conversation topics are designed to elicit spiritual dialogue, creating natural inroads for the gospel. The missionary team offers one-on-one Bible studies for those interested in learning more.

“Often people want to talk about Jesus or the Bible, but they don’t know if other people are comfortable with it. So once they find out this is a safe space for them, it gets the ball rolling,” said missionary Megan Kuhn.

Additional ABWE teammates serve at Evangelical Christian Academy (ECA), an ACSI-accredited K-12 international school providing quality Christian education for the children of missionaries, businesspeople, and Spanish nationals. ECA has proven instrumental in allowing missionary families to expand their ministry throughout the region.

### A Vision To Win Europe

In places like Spain, witnessing fruit from one’s ministry can take a lifetime. Reaching secular, self-sufficient individuals often requires an investment of years, even decades, without seeing visible results. Yet Christ is building his church in all nations—not least of all in Europe.

While faithfully persevering in their work, the ABWE team turns a hopeful gaze toward the spread of the gospel in Europe.

“We pray that God would bring reformation to the hearts of Spaniards, that our churches would be lights of revival to spread across Spain and Europe,” conveyed Caleb Hague.

God is working even now, emphasizes Miguel Ángel. “Our God is the God of the impossible, and I am living proof that a Spaniard can kneel before God and say ‘Lord, save me, because I need you.’” ■

**Watch how ABWE church plants are changing lives in Spain and partner with us:**  
[abwe.ca/location/spain/](https://abwe.ca/location/spain/)



**Inset:** Missionaries Caleb and Krystie Hague

**Right:** Missionaries Adam and Emily Byerly and Rosalie Duryee meet over coffee at Brilla Café.



Photo: Katelyn Hawkins



**“We pray that God would bring reformation to the hearts of Spaniards, that our churches would be lights of revival to spread across Spain and Europe.”**

Caleb Hague



# Sneaking Past Watchful Dragons

BY: DR. MELISSA BACCARELLA

Committing a costly error, I purchased an artificial Christmas tree that was too big for my home. When I subsequently donated it to an association that uses the senior citizens centre in my town for its activities, they enthusiastically received it and invited me to their annual Christmas dinner. There, a woman named Mariangela introduced herself to me, claiming to admire evangelicals and lamenting that she was too old to change her religion, despite her estrangement from the Roman Catholic Church.

“You see,” Mariangela said, “I committed a mortal sin, and the Church has not permitted me to receive communion since.”

I enquired, “What mortal sin did you commit that prohibits you from receiving communion, which ought to prompt your thankfulness and remembrance of Jesus’ perfect, once-for-all sacrifice for your sins?”

Mariangela responded: “I am divorced, so there is no real remedy or hope for me.”

I grasped Mariangela’s hands and said: “Do you not see, Mariangela, that to believe God can forgive so far but no

farther renders Christ’s sacrifice on the cross deficient? Was the Son of God’s action so small a gesture that it did not atone for your divorce? The Scriptures announce Jesus as the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world: all the sin, all the divorces, and other tragedies, big and small. Mariangela, in Christ, you are forgiven, free, and made whole and holy by God’s grace. Let yourself be saved, and rest in God’s complete forgiveness!”

Mariangela began to weep, keeping her hands in mine while furtively wiping her sleeves across her face to clear away her tears. Presently, the evening’s program continued, and our exchange abruptly ended.

I tried to follow up with her to no avail. Mariangela seemed reluctant to meet again. When we finally met at a café, she insisted on her preference to remain as she is, alienated from God and without hope.

A colleague recently reminded me of C.S. Lewis’ description of “watchful dragons”—certain personal or cultural inhibitions that paralyse, hinder, or check someone’s impulse to receive testimony about Christ and instruction in the Christian life. We try to sneak



past them in Italy by forming friendships with Italians through participating in community service, local clubs, and events. I used to focus on initiating occasions on my own, but I have learned the value of joining and contributing to what Italians have already started. Earning their trust and establishing credibility over months and usually years is the only way to overcome spiritual inhibitions nurtured since birth.

By loving Jesus and God’s Word in the presence of my Italian friends, some learn to quiet their dragons long enough to reach for the perfect love of Christ. He alone has the power to defang our fears and slay our dragons. ■

**Dr. Melissa Baccarella** has served in Italy since 2003 and currently ministers with a church planting team in Caselle, north of Turin, where she designs the church’s liturgical and discipleship materials and draws Italians into fellowship through friendship and Christian witness. She is also a content provider for YouVersion Italy. In 2024, Melissa completed her Ph.D. in missiology.

Photos: Getty Images



# A Glimpse Into a Complex Mission Field

BY: ABWE EDITORIAL STAFF

PHOTOGRAPHER: JEFF RAYMOND

LOCATION: PORTUGAL

**L**isbon, Portugal, is a unique blend of old-world tradition and new philosophies that drive the spiritual climate toward a secular worldview.

Strategically located on the Iberian Peninsula at the southwestern tip of Europe and bordered only by Spain and the Atlantic Ocean, Portugal once maintained a powerful maritime economy and global influence. Portuguese explorers of the 15th and 16th centuries carried Roman Catholicism throughout the world, and, while religion has since been formally separated from the state, it maintains an important role in Portuguese culture and identity. Of the 93 percent of Portugal's 10 million people identifying as Christian, 87 percent are Roman Catholic—at least in name—while only 3.5 percent are evangelical believers.

The Portuguese report a higher affiliation with belief in God than many of their European counterparts. Even though

many Catholic congregants no longer attend mass regularly, many remain open to spiritual topics. The evangelical church has faced some opposition to gospel-centred teaching, and the need for believers to share Christ's love through genuine relationships and dedicated investment is great.

ABWE missionaries in Portugal are committed to engaging their communities through church planting and creative avenues for evangelism. The team has planted seven churches that have transitioned to local leadership and is preparing to launch additional church plants in the greater Lisbon area. Team members also serve through community relationship building, hosting marriage classes, teaching English as a Second Language, and ministries to the deaf.

Pray for the people of Portugal to re-encounter the gospel and leverage their unique culture and geography to influence their region for Christ. ■



**Jeff Raymond** has been with ABWE since 1997 and currently serves in communications as a media missionary. He works closely with ABWE missionaries to train them to use visual storytelling as the basis of their communications strategies.

# Whither Christendom?

Understanding the enduring nature of Christ's reign can alleviate fear concerning the fall of the Christian West.

BY: ALEX KOCCMAN

Nietzsche once remarked, "The Christian resolve to find the world ugly and bad has made the world ugly and bad." More than a century later, Christopher Hitchens, in his 2007 book *God Is Not Great*, argued that "religion poisons everything."

With such robust opposition to Christianity since the Enlightenment, it's little wonder that what was once Christendom now appears scorched and shaken. Centuries of religious cynicism have

led to a prevailing attitude in the English-speaking world that sees itself as post-truth, post-objectivity, and hence, post-Christian. The flaws of past Christian societies, amplified by modern revisionism, serve as a pretext under which secularist forces undertake their iconoclastic crusade.

Scripture offers a vivid image of God as one who removes what may be shaken so that the unshakable may remain (Hebrews 12:27). This compels us to question whether Christendom has truly perished amid the visible upheaval of the West's Christian consensus.

The enduring nature of Christ's reign yields a resounding "no" to this query. The nations of this world belong to Jesus (Psalm 2:8), and we must consider the world and its cultures through this lens. Consider just three observations to guide us in this way.

First, an honest engagement with Scripture calls us to wake from the spell of secularism. Recent centuries have lulled us into the notion that a neutral society, ordered without reference to God, is possible. This notion is manifestly untenable. Neutrality, it seems, was always a myth; without Christ, chaos abounds.

Interestingly, the concept of secularism itself stems from Christian thought. The Latin term *saeculum* evokes the notion of "the present evil age" (Galatians 1:4), marked by sin and imperfection, distinct from the forthcoming age of righteous-



Photo: Lightstock

# “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”

Revelation 11:15

Photo: Jordan Timpy

ness and eternal life. This understanding that the earthly realm must assume a specific, imperfect form in the current age is inherently Christian; non-Christian philosophies typically lean towards an endless cyclical history (Buddhism) or utopian visions (Darwinism, Marxism). Rather than cede the world to systems arrayed against Christ's authority, we must recognize that we live in a *saeculum* in which Christ reigns from heaven and continues to build his church among the nations.

Second, the concept of “the next Christendom,” as Philip Jenkins and others describe, points to the explosive growth of Christianity in the global South. According to the World Christian Database:

- The Christian population in Africa has increased from 120 million in 1970 to an estimated 688 million by mid-2024, with projections of reaching 1.25 billion by 2050.
- Latin America's Christian numbers have risen from 291 million in 1970 to 649 million in mid-2024, expected to hit 779 million by 2050.
- Asia has seen its Christian populace grow from 96 million in 1970 to an estimated 390 million in mid-2024, with forecasts suggesting a rise to nearly 589 million by 2050.

Even as the Christian consensus recedes in the Western, developed world, a geographical shift

rather than an extinguishment of Christianity's global influence is evident.

Finally, consider the words of prominent atheist Richard Dawkins from an April interview with Britain's LBC News: “I call myself a cultural Christian. I'm not a believer, but I love hymns and Christmas carols, and I sort of feel at home in the Christian ethos. . . . We [in the U.K.] are a ‘Christian country’ in that sense.” Once the Christian faith impacts a culture, it leaves an indelible mark. Critiquing Christianity on moral grounds inevitably relies upon Christianity's own philosophical capital, as atheist historian Tom Holland pointed out in his social media reply to Dawkins: “[S]ecularism & Dawkins' own brand of evangelical atheism are both expressions of a specifically Christian culture—as Dawkins himself, sitting on the branch he's been sawing through and gazing nervously at the ground far below, seems to have begun to realise.” Like fish unaware they're wet, even the staunchest opponents of Christianity remain under the influence of its pervasive ethos.

As the foundations of Christian influence in the West seem to waver—and likely will continue to—let us remember that he who sits in the heavens laughs (Psalm 2:4). Despite temporary setbacks, “[t]he kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). ■



**Alex Kocman** is the director of communications and engagement for ABWE. He serves as general editor for Message Magazine and co-hosts The Missions Podcast. He lives in Pennsylvania with his wife and four children.



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