



# Kingdom Mosaics from Spain

## Prayers, and Praises:

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- Praises for a great time of teaching and refreshment and community with all of the TMS Global workers from around the globe! More than 300 people met in Turkey for our Global Gathering that occurs every two years. This is a time of reconnecting as an organization, hearing updates and stories from the various cross-cultural workers and their fields, learning new skills together, and prayer for the Kingdom. Laurie was the director of the content team for the week-long gathering, as well as leading a training piece and several sessions. Billy led two workshops (one on Burnout, and one on Spiritual Formation on the Trail). 
- Praises for a few days off after the conference in Turkey. Thanks to a generous personal Christmas gift from an old friend in Tennessee, we were able to go to Cappadocia with friends and see the sights, take a canyon hike, and go up in a hot air balloon! This was really such a special time to rest and play with some of our dearest friends and we are so very grateful for a gift that covered the extra fun stuff. Thank you, Harold!!! 
- Please pray for us and our teammates in Spain as our team is being restructured over the next weeks/months. We have asked for prayers over the last few months regarding the natural process of “storming” when it comes to team formation and development. Unfortunately, our team has been unsuccessful at navigating some of those storms and the decision was made to reevaluate vision and values and restructure. This comes at great emotional cost and the grief process is very difficult. We have so deeply wanted a team and a community that could do this work together, so it is with great sorrow that we watch it come to an end. We will greatly miss the dream of doing this together. Thank you for praying for this. God will work it out for the good of his people, and we trust Him in that.



## this issue

Glimmers of Hope P.1-3

Prayers and Praises P.1

Become a Hero! Partner with Us! P.4

## Glimmers of Hope: Ministry in Spain is a commitment to the long game

The role of cross-cultural workers in Europe, particularly in Spain, is filled with unique joys but also significant struggles. Spain, a country rich in history and tradition, has long been shaped by the influence of the Catholic Church. Cathedrals that once stood as vibrant centers of faith now stand as quiet relics, more visited by tourists than by worshippers seeking spiritual nourishment. The decline of Catholicism has left a spiritual void, but it's not a void people are eager to fill.

While you might think that this decline would open doors for the protestant church to grow, that hasn't been the case. Growth remains stagnant, and evangelical communities are often small and isolated. Our church in Antequera has been in existence for 50 years and has a current congregation of 100 attendees on a good Sunday.

More often than not, the spiritual void is being filled by a new interest in alternative spiritualities—witchcraft, crystals, tarot cards, or a mix of various practices from various religions and spirit worlds. One man we know calls himself a Buddhist Catholic. We recently received a flier in our mailbox advertising services of a ‘professor’ who will cast spells, read palms and tarot, divine your future, and conjure up a love match for you (all for a price). There's a sense of uphill struggle, as if the soil itself has grown hard and resistant to new seeds of hope.

What makes this challenge even greater is the cultural spirit of resistance—and often outright apathy—toward matters of faith. Generations have grown disillusioned with institutional religion, viewing it as outdated and irrelevant. Conversations about God are often met with polite indifference or deep skepticism. Some cite the atrocities of the church from Spanish history. Many of our neighbors simply don't see the need for the church in their lives. Life seems comfortable enough without it, and Sundays are reserved for family and friends and community events.

As a result, cross-cultural ministry work here requires patience, creativity, and a willingness to journey with people slowly, authentically, and without pretense. Relationships are key. Trust is earned over shared meals, long conversations, and genuine care for people's lives. It's less about grand events and more about sharing life and coffee and chats in the street - faithfully walking alongside

Continued on page 2...

Continued from page 1...

individuals, showing the love of Christ in everyday moments.

There is certainly hope bubbling up in small ways. We feel it. While there may be a resistance to traditional religious structures, there is often a longing for connection, purpose, and meaning—things that biblical hospitality and the gospel offer in abundance.

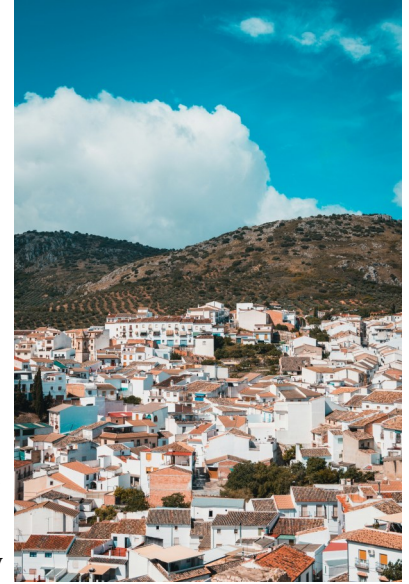
The little glimmers of hope that we have seen in the past few months are what keep us going. We've now lived and worked in Spain for 12 years, and we are just now seeing fruit from a long, slow, patient walk with our neighbors and community. We see it in \*Marco and \*Mari. We have been living here for years, and they just now have come to call us "neighbors". Marco and Mari have an adult special needs son (\*Juan) who lives with them. Until recent years in Spain (post Franco and a 36-year dictatorship), children with special needs were invisible, hidden away from the public, leading to isolation and shame and loneliness for their families as they tried to care for them alone. Thankfully, things are changing and there is now help and a conscious effort to support these families. But education of the public is a slow endeavor that will take a generation to overcome. When \*Juan was having a seizure at the bus stop recently, Billy happened to be walking by and noticed. As \*Juan was in crisis and Mari struggled to help him, Billy stepped in and asked if he could help. A few others stepped in to see what they could do, but \*Mari brushed them away and responded, "No – we will be okay, Billy is our good neighbor. He will take care of us and get us home." This woman who has quietly observed us over the years had finally come to trust us and know our hearts. A couple of weeks ago as Billy was helping \*Marco with a few things, he turned to Billy with tears welling up and threatening to overflow. "You are different. You are good people," he said and he gave Billy a hug.

A small funny story about neighbors – a few weeks ago, I received a text from a friend. We were out of town and she had gone by our house to get something. As she tried to park in front of our garage to go in, \*Pepe (our 85-year-old neighbor) swooped in and began to let her have it. "You can't park here! This is not your house! You need to move. Get out of this spot. This is not your house!" My friend tried to explain that she was a friend and she had permission to be there, but \*Pepe was relentless. He was going to protect us and our house at all costs. I had to laugh. Everyone in the neighborhood knows \*Pepe and knows that he is quirky and outspoken. He is also lonely, having lost his wife a few years ago. He lives alone, and does everything he can to not be at home in his house because it makes him sad. So, he walks. A lot. He patrols the neighborhood and strikes up a conversation with everyone. He walks other people's dogs just so he can have a role and some company. He can frequently be found by our garage, watching the world go by and talking to whoever will listen... usually Billy. He is full of random facts and he cannot wait to share his wisdom. My heart was particularly warmed by my friend's awkward encounter with \*Pepe that day. He loves us and he wanted to show that love by protecting our home, even when we were not there.

We see hope in our local church. When we arrived 12 years ago, this church congregation of around 100 people was 70% Spaniard and 30% immigrant, mostly Latin Americans. The Spaniards sat on one side of the church, while the immigrants sat on the other. The pastor was struggling with how to minister to and lead two very distinct populations that encompassed various different cultures. On most Sundays, these populations were at odds with each other over cultural differences. There was an undercurrent of division and rebellion as several elders disagreed over theology, leadership decisions, and vision, which led to a dramatic drop in attendance in a very short time. The church's one missional outreach effort was to house a government-sponsored food bank in a back room. There were a handful of youth and no young children and it appeared that the church would inevitably die.

Today, this church is seeing a turn-around. Attendance is up and growing. There are many new families. The pastor has embraced learning about cultures and how to be more cross-cultural in his approaches. There are new leaders and volunteers. The worship team has more than doubled in size. The church is now involved in missional outreach in the form of a vibrant food bank, a clothes closet, showers and emergency housing for refugees and the homeless, bible studies and programs in the regional prison, and more. Miguel, the pastor, has been an active participant in the Refugee Highway Partnership Europe for several years now with Billy. This year, he and his assistant pastor will attend a two-week cross-cultural ministry training in Panama with us. The church and the pastor that we see today feels like a completely new thing in Christ and this gives us so much hope!

We see glimmers of belonging as we stroll downtown on our evening walks. It is nearly impossible to be downtown at this point and not run into people who stop us for conversations. After 12 years, we have built friendships and relationships with many people in many different ways.





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We were recently in our favorite restaurant when a new waiter came to our table. He immediately tried to talk to us in English, realizing that we are not Spaniards. The restaurant owner jumped in and laughed and told the waiter, “These two are locals. They’ve been coming here for years. They speak better Spanish than you speak English. They are Antequeranos.” That was so huge! Those words mean the world to us, on so many levels.

In that same week, we were in another of our favorite spots in town and the table behind us asked the host if we were Brits (he could hear us talking to each other). The host laughed and said very loudly, “Absolutely not! They are one of us! They are faithful customers. They speak very good Spanish. They’ve lived here for years. They are Antequeranos.” In a small pueblo in Spain, these words carry a lot of weight.

As one of our best friends told us last week over coffee, “We (Spaniards) may be nice or polite to everyone, but we aren’t dumb. We can sniff out a fake. We can sniff out the outsiders who don’t care or who have an agenda. Don’t mistake our politeness or hospitality or our smile for acceptance or friendship. That comes at a cost. That takes years to develop. Trust is hard won here.”

After 12 years, we are now seeing and hearing and feeling the difference. Trust and friendships have been built over years and years of a slow and steady obedience to living out the love of Christ among our neighbors. Our friend went on to say, “Those first five or six years after you came here were critical. Those were the years when you built the foundation. That was when the community learned who you were and observed what you did. That is what built their trust in you. Your reputation was formed from your love and service during those years. Now, you are one of us. We know you. We know who you are and what you believe. You are ours.”

There is beauty in simply being faithful, in planting seeds even when you may not see the harvest. Jesus’ ministry reminds us that transformation often starts small, like a mustard seed, and that God is always at work, even when it’s unseen.

In Spain, we are called to be cultivators of hope, tending to the soil with love, patience, and grace. It’s a challenge, but it’s also a privilege—to witness firsthand how God is moving, quietly yet powerfully, in this beautiful and complex part of the world. And we hold on to the promise that His word does not return void, even here, even now.



## 2025—A Year at a Glance

While loving our neighbors well and living out the love of Christ in our hometown in Spain, never stops, we also have other ministries and events that we work on throughout the year. Here are a few things that we have in the works for 2025:

- **February** - Hosting a Vision and Learning Trip for several visitors from the USA. They will be learning about the religious history of Spain and visiting several important historical sites, learning about the history of the Christians, the Muslims, and the Jews of Spain, learning about years of a dictatorship and its connections to some pretty notorious bad guys in world history, and how all of that effects faith and church in Spain today.
- **March** - The Refugee Highway Partnership Europe is having their annual conference and roundtable in Malaga this year. Billy is on the leadership and coordinating team and will be helping coordinate the 2025 conference from the local perspective. Laurie has been asked to teach a session at the conference on Multifaceted Gospel Perspective: Understanding Guilt/Innocence, Shame/Honor, and Fear/Power Culture Dynamics. We always take our pastor (Miguel) to this conference every year. This year, the conference leaders have asked Miguel to give the opening remarks. He is so honored and excited!
- **March** - Billy sings with the local performance choir. They have several concerts in March, their largest one being Mozart’s Requiem, which will be performed in conjunction with an orchestra and two other choirs!
- **May** - Billy will be leading a group on the Camino de Santiago (Portuguese Route) for two weeks of spiritual formation and retreat.
- **June—July** - We will be leading a training in Panama for cross-cultural workers and pastors. This training will be carried out in both Spanish and English and will have approximately 70 in attendance. We are especially excited about the opportunity to train not only new cross-cultural workers from the USA, but also many pastors and workers from Panama, Brazil, Nicaragua, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe, Spain, and more!
- **September—October** - Billy leads TWO different groups, almost back to back, each on two-weeks treks on the Camino de Santiago for spiritual formation, discipleship, and retreat. He should be plenty exhausted by the time that ends! And he’ll probably need to replace his hiking boots by the end of this year!
- **End of October** - We will head back to Kenya to lead a train-the-trainer event for 15-20 cross-cultural workers, pastors, and ministry leaders in Nyahururu, Kenya. This is in response to the training that we led in 2024. The leader of this organization in Kenya would like to partner with us to train up leaders and trainers in Kenya who can extend the reach of this training.

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- Our greatest desire is to see people become who God created them to be and to live into their purpose. We believe that everyone has value. Everyone has talents, skills, and unique abilities. We want to see that come alive!
- Nurturing and developing people to be healthy spiritually, physically, emotionally, and relationally - because “care” is not just an emotional feeling word, “care” is a verb - an action. That’s what we’re about - developing and caring for people so they can live into their unique design and God-given purpose.

## Become a Partner! We would love to have you on our team!



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Dear Billy and Laurie,

I will pray for you.

As God provides, I plan to partner with you by giving

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ Per month / year.

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