

Welcome to the autumn 2020 edition of *Spotlight on Spain*

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THE CORONAVIRUS SITUATION AS OF JULY 2020

"Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square...

How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?...

Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings. For the waywardness of the simple will kill them ... but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."

(Proverbs 1:20-33)



At last the lockdown is over and we have moved on to the "NN" – New Normal. Great! Everything is going back to normal: the streets are full of people and we are all going like lizards in search of the sun! Shops are selling their goods; factories are making things; the pavement cafes are full of friends eating the *tapas* that we've been missing so much. And what about the beach? As though nothing had happened, wipe the slate clean! Oh yes, so clean! Our government has christened this phase as the "New Normal" where some habits have changed (hygiene, the way we mix with people, and many social habits we gradually need to get used to).

But that's the least of it, because things are at last getting back to how they were before, everything seems to be going back to normal ...

Wisdom continues to call aloud in the town squares inviting us to join her in entering a "New Normal" where foolishness and rejection of the Creator are not considered; but what can we do? How foolish of us to want a "New Normal" that takes us back to our old habits, living our life as before, far from the One who created us and from Whom every perfect gift comes. Like Israel of old, accustomed to their slavery, we keep longing for the meat pots of Egypt rather than manna from heaven – the only food that will fill us, free us from fear and cause us to live trusting.

As Psalm 14 says and the apostle Paul repeated: The fool says in his heart, "there is no God". Spain needs such a great miracle! Power must come from heaven through the Holy Spirit to convince of sin, justice and righteousness. Our eyes long to see a miracle of transforming grace in our beloved Spain! Like the prophet Jeremiah, we weep for our country, for the people who live here, boasting of their human wisdom and incapable of leaving their utter foolishness which despises the Creator. Today, more than ever, we must get on our knees and agonise before the throne of grace so that heaven will distil the honey that is sweeter than any angel or person has ever known – the love of Christ saving the lost and making the foolish wise. Lord bring a new normality – yes, but one where all foolishness (due to people not fearing You) is left behind, and where thousands of souls in this barren land are washed with living water (Yourself). Don't leave us to return to being what we were before."

(Manuel Valero)

ONLINE UPDATES

Please note that David and Jacky Cogman are available to give online updates via Zoom on the work of the Spanish Gospel Mission.

If you would like them to do this for your church or group, please contact them. Their contact details can be found on the final page of this edition of *Spotlight on Spain*.

NEWS FROM MORAL DE CALATRAVA

Due to Covid-19 and the state of emergency issued by the Spanish government, the church in Moral had to close from March to June. By means of Zoom, Sunday services and mid-week meetings were able to carry on. This internet tool was also used to contact former members and friends now living in different towns, or even different countries. Some members of the church did contract the virus but all recovered.

It is hoped that a Christian couple, Elías and Dayana and their young children, will be able to move to Moral. Elías works for the police and has requested a transfer. It would be a great encouragement for the church if this became a reality.

José Luís was able to restart radio programmes in June. They are broadcast each weekday morning. Pray for the seed sown in this way.



The church has been enabled to support needy families by distributing food during the lockdown.

A new cohort of students on the SEFOVAN theological course, coordinated by José Luís, started this academic year with classes normally taking place in the Mission House. Please pray for them.



SEFOVAN in Monescillo

Family matters

The family has been kept well during these difficult times. Natanael has started working as a building apprentice and Eric finished his school year, passing all his exams. Sadly, Natanael is very cold spiritually and needs our prayers. Noemi's father has received treatment for cancer and his health has seen some improvement, but there are also complications and a possible spread of the disease. He lives in Galicia, eight hours' drive away from Moral.

NEWS FROM MANZANARES

The church was able to restart services in the church building on 31 May, and services were streamed on Facebook for those who could not attend. It was encouraging that people who did not normally attend could participate in this way. Their prayer is for fruit for salvation through this means. Sadly, two families have stopped attending and don't follow on Facebook either.

The Holiday Bible Club and evangelistic campaign were cancelled due to the pandemic. But food distribution did continue. Many of the families have heard the gospel over several years and good relationships have been formed; they share their problems and ask for advice, but more is desired – that they would come to know the Lord.

Manolo leads a Bible study with a family from Manzanares, originally from Ecuador, who moved to London five years ago. The mother and two daughters were converted in Manzanares and now one of the sons and the woman's husband have also been converted. They all follow the online services as well. Praise the Lord for this opportunity to help and encourage these friends.

Family matters

Manolo's health is still quite unstable; he is likely to need surgery to deal with his Crohn's disease. There was cause for rejoicing when their first grandchild was born at the end of July. Little Eva was born at the end of July and was dedicated on 6 September.

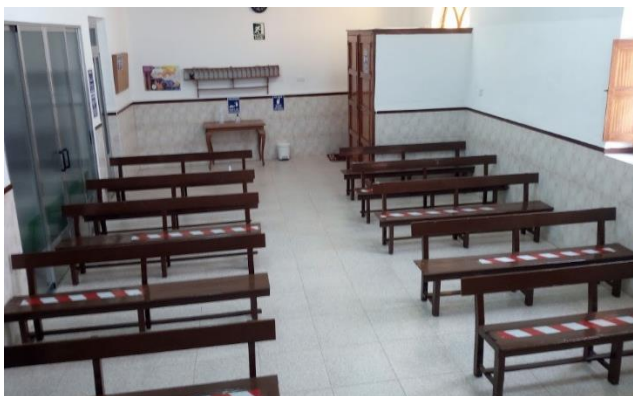


Rubén and Déborah with baby Eva

NEWS FROM SANTA CRUZ DE MUDELA



It wasn't easy to stay encouraged or to encourage others during the time of lockdown. Some older members have had physical health problems from being at home for so long and unable to be mobile, one had Covid-19 but thankfully has recovered, and others have suffered emotionally. But it was a joy to all when services restarted at the church on 21 June.



Due to the fragile situation regarding the pandemic, the Holiday Bible Club and children's camp had to be cancelled this summer.

Sergio has resumed meeting with Fernando, a man who is interested in the gospel and regularly attends the services.

One of the mothers Chani has had contact with due to meeting her via school events and whose children used to attend the Bible Club and Bilingual Camp has been deeply affected by her brother's recent conversion and is asking many questions. Please pray for Lucia.

Family matters

Jennifer has moved to the secondary school and is settling in well due to the support of the Headmistress and a support worker who are helping her to adjust and settle in to the new environment. This is a matter of great encouragement to Sergio and Chani who were concerned that Jenni would find her new school intimidating and difficult to cope with.

NEWS FROM MONESCILLO MISSION HOUSE

During the lockdown the Lord's work in the Mission House came to a complete standstill. Hopes had been high, with several events, groups and churches booking retreats and meetings, but all had to be cancelled. The future is uncertain, but the Lord is faithful to keep us when we go to Him in prayer and commit everything to Him.

In July, once the worst of the pandemic seemed over, a retreat of a group of Christian bikers took place. The Christian Motorcyclists Association is committed to street evangelism and creating friendships with other bikers in various places.



Christian Motorcyclists Association retreat

The Craft workshop has been cancelled for the rest of the year as many of the women who attend are elderly and at risk of the virus. Let's pray that they will not lose interest and will return when possible to continue with the activity so that they can go on listening to God's word in their coffee break!

Family matters

Abi has started to work as a cleaner in the health centre and is also registered on the SEFOVAN course and so is busy and happy. Josué is in his final year of secondary school.



Pepe and Lydia with Abigail and Josué

ALL SAINTS' DAY

All Saints Day in Spain takes place on November 1st. It is a national public holiday and people from all over the country return to their town or village to lay flowers on the graves of deceased relatives. It is a very important religious day that means a lot to the ordinary Spanish people.

Many Spanish people celebrate two birthdays each year. They have their ordinary birthday to remember the day they were born, but they also celebrate on the day of their personal patron saint. For most people their patron saint will be the one after whom they were named. However, on November 1st each year, the Feast of All of the Saints is held and this particular public holiday centres on remembering dead family members.

Most people visit the graves of relatives and decorate them with elaborate floral displays. For many people it's an emotional time, and Mass will often be performed in the cemetery several times throughout the day. Travelling is difficult on October 31st, as millions of people finish work early in the afternoon and head for their birthplace – so there is a lot of traffic congestion, especially on the motorways leaving the main cities.



Spanish cemetery on All Saints' Day

As with many festivals throughout the country, there are a number of special dishes associated with All Saints' Day. One popular sweet is called "huesos de santo" – saint's bones – which are made with marzipan, eggs and sugar.



There are times when it is easy to forget how catholic Spain can be, but All Saints' Day is a powerful reminder of the importance of religion, the family and superstition, even in our modern technological age.



SPANISH GOSPEL MISSION

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