

thewhitesinspain

Christmas 2021

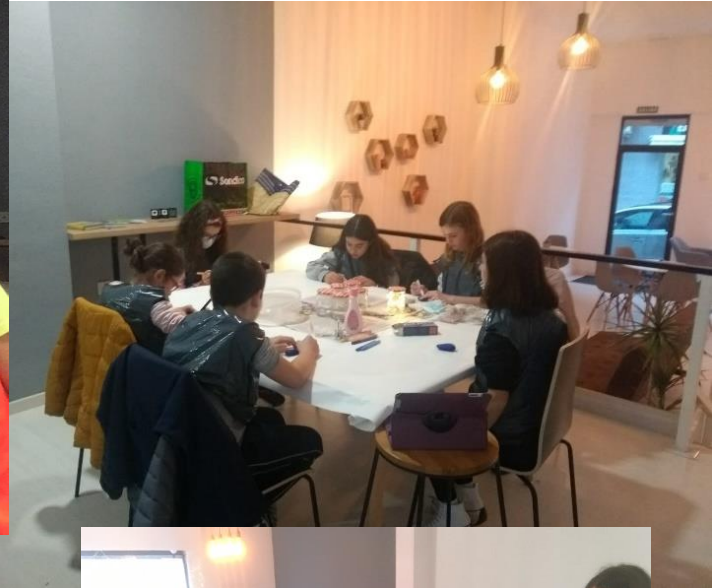
Dear St James,

It doesn't seem possible that 2021 is nearly over. I think we can all agree the last year has been challenging as we negotiate this new reality and take stock of the effects it has had on our own well being and that of our community. Spain has one of the highest percentages of vaccinated population globally and currently the cases are very low as we have never stopped wearing masks for most things. However, we find here people are still very cautious to meet up or leave their houses. It has compounded the Spanish tendency to be quite insular and spend their free time at home with their extended families. Despite this, there have been some exciting things happening.

After a long visit to the UK in the summer Liz stayed on another month to have some rest time and a break from life as a mum which can be very full on. She went to Liverpool to spend time with some really good friends and our old church community there. Chris came back to Granada to get the boys established back in school and worked hard to finish off our Community Centre/Cafe Church. We opened at the start of October with most things finished but we had so many people wanting to use the space we decided we just had to start. We still didn't have running water after a frustrating 4-month battle with the water board (finally resolved in November) but made do with bottled water from our neighbours. At the opening we didn't invite everyone as there isn't enough space so we will stagger the opening and have an official one in the new year. We had around 25 people, some who have been involved in the project, neighbours from the street, new believers, and a Senegalese Muslim family we have got to know. It was amazing to see the space full of people of all ages and walks of life who are all on some kind of a journey with Jesus.



We want to take this opportunity to thank every one of you who gave so generously to this project. It came in on budget and we have rent, and bills covered almost to the summer. It is so exciting dreaming with each other and God about what this could be and 8 months later having it as a reality! There are so many stories we could tell of things God has already done in this space since we opened. We are currently open 4 mornings a week and one afternoon, alongside this we have had several one off events including: a monthly youth group with 12+ attending, a light party for 31st October, Christmas craft workshops for kids and adults alongside a weekly Discovery Bible Study Dave runs for 3 new believers. If you are unfamiliar with DBS the idea is not to teach theology whilst people listen but to create space for God to speak to people directly through His Word, so their dependence is built in God and not on us. Giving them the tools to open the Bible on their own, to hear God speak and to know how to apply it to their lives. This is so important, God's Word has to move us to action, its real, practical, relevant and powerful and we want our friends to experience this first-hand.



La Fuente 'The Well'

As a team our vision and has been to create a place in our town which feels like a home, where the moment people walk in they encounter Gods presence, love and they feel they can belong. Rather than a place where we are always waiting on people, we want to create a community where people feel its 'their space' too. This has been working really well, we have a steady stream of people coming in, regulars who feel free to make their own drinks and wash up if there is some that needs doing, others we invite for coffee, to disciple or listen to, and others who we don't know have passed by and come in to see what we are about. The name La Fuente comes from our understanding that thirsty people will come and drink and having drunk will want to come back. Every morning we worship and pray together 40mins in the space before opening. We pray that God's presence would draw people to us.

One morning I saw a young man looking in the window as we worshipped. I went to speak with him, and he said that he and wife's life was a mess and was this a place where he could talk to someone! We said 'of course, that's exactly why we are here!' He came later that day and Dave & Kellie were able to listen, pray with them and speak life into their situation. It turns out there is a retired Spanish missionary couple living in the apartment block above our cafe and they knew this young couple and for years had been praying that they could meet someone their age who could help them!! Its so amazing to see how God works and connects all these pieces together!

Next door to us a sweet shop has opened and we have got to know the girl who runs it. She came to our opening and to a Christmas workshop Chris ran last Saturday to gather some of our contacts together to make Christmas table centres. She loved spending time with us and Kellie shared some words God gave her for this girl (Laura) She was crying as Holy Spirit spoke to here and touched her heart. We have given her a Bible and are helping her to start reading it. The other morning Dave was with the group of new believers, I was looking after their kids doing Playdough, Kellie was discipling another woman who is on a journey and there were people coming and going throughout the morning. I looked around and just felt such a sense of gratitude, excitement and joy to see what we have longed for so long starting to happen in a natural, organic way.

Please pray for us that every day is full of life changing encounters for or friends, that as things grow, we would have more people come and join us to help out (there have been some exciting things happening I can share next time) and that we will hear God as how best to use the space He has given us.

As we celebrate this Christmas, in a world where there is so much pain, uncertainty, shaking and changing, I want to encourage you to be bold. We have 'Good News of great Joy,' Emmanuel – God with us! He is not surprised, the incredible Son of God - The Word made flesh, He came into a very similar world, yet He showed us how to live, be, showed us The Father and on the cross suffered and died that we can live free, without fear and with great hope and expectation.

'I have told you these things, so that **in me** you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. **But take heart! I have overcome the World.** John 16:33

Let's carry these words into 2022, whatever happens we have a certainty and great hope, His name is Jesus!

God bless you. Wishing you a very happy Christmas, with much love, Chris, Liz, Leo & Sam

