

thewhitesinspain

Nov 2015

Dear friends & family,

I know I have only just written to you but we have some very exciting news to update you on! There is a long story which I will tell but the short story is that in April 2016 we are moving to Southern Spain to pioneer a new work there. We have loved our time in Puzol, which will be just under 5 years, and working with the ministry but we always felt it was a place of training and transition.

God's Whispers

About 18 months ago we felt God start speaking to us about the next season of our lives. Our vision is still to see Spanish churches started and raised up; having seen that happen we felt really we could go anywhere and do the same. For the first time in our lives we felt Holy Spirit say where do you want to go! Wow! Spain is a very big place but we both have a desire to live closer the mountains to give our boys a chance to grow up close to nature. They both love being outdoors but for Leo particularly its something very therapeutic and we wanted a place where we can have a garden and maybe keep some animals which we know he would love. We don't want to be too isolated as our desire is to be connected and to live lives amongst the people; we also wanted to be close to a city and not too far from an airport. We started exploring the coast of Andalusia near Malaga with a trip 18 months ago but both felt there are too many tourists and expats there. So it was back to praying over a map knowing that a closed door is still God guiding us! So often God loves to speak in a whisper to draw us in, test our hearts and willingness to risk and move in faith, without knowing how the story ends. I have been reading and reflecting on the heroes of the faith like Abraham and Noah who risked everything for a whisper! We know the end of the story but these men risked reputation and comfort to say 'yes' to Gods whisper. This is something we want to be, people who say 'yes' to Him because He is worth it!!

Where are we going?

I was praying over a map and God lead me to the town of La Zubia, just outside Granada city. I didn't know anything about this place but after visiting we felt this was where we should be. It is a town of 20,000 just 10 minutes from Granada (pictured) which is a city of ¼ million people. La Zubia is joined by a group of 5 or 6 other towns which form a large concentration of people living on the mountainside. God has been speaking to me about the word retreat



for 18 months previously, that our home will be a retreat for us a family to find Him in the midst of the pressures of ministry/life. A retreat for the locals to encounter Jesus; and a place where people will come from the Nations to find Him. I have since learnt that original name of La Zubia in the Arabic means 'retreat' and was a centre for the Moors to come and connect with God since the 10th century! The first queen of Spain also went there to retreat and connect with God! This has been the first of many confirmations we have received since making the decision to move, including prophetic words from New Zealand, California and the UK all confirming what God has placed in our hearts.

What will we be doing?

We want to be based somewhere for the next period of our lives where we can reach people and do church as a lifestyle. It is the perfect time to get the boys into a new school as Sam will start in September and Leo ends his first phase; hopefully they can both start at the same school. We want to take all the things we have learnt and apply them with a blank sheet of paper. Explore what Church, community, life looks like in Spain amongst the Spanish; we don't want to import a UK model or even a model from Valencia! Our desire is that as we live lives amongst the people of La Zubia and Granada city they will have an encounter with Jesus; not with religion or a structure, not with a meeting or a club, but something real! We will take time in the presence of God daily to lay foundations and see what He is doing. Our plan is not to open a location too soon but look to identify key people/leaders that God places on our heart and invest in them first. This is so we don't end up with a hospital full of needy

people and no nurses, but also so the Spanish have ownership of the work rather than us doing everything and then expecting them to be committed.



Who are we going with?

I mentioned before about risk and this has been a huge step of faith for us in the area of team. We have always wanted to live and work as part of a team for many reasons and believe this is crucial to a healthy, sustainable work. So moving away to a place we know no one and starting again seems crazy!! But we have to follow God's whispers!! 12 months ago a prophet came from New Zealand and without knowing anything of our plans said 'God has heard your desire for team and He will bring you a team for this next stage of your lives'!! A few months ago I met a guy from the UK called Dave at a football game and started chatting. Along with his wife Kelly and 2 young children, Lucas and Jasmine, they have been in Valencia the last 4 years with a desire to plant church amongst the Spanish and are now in a time of transition. We felt we should share our plans with them and then leave it in God's hands as we didn't want to force them as they have just joined a Spanish congregation in the city. A few weeks later Dave asked to come with me when I travelled to La Zubia to look at houses, only a few weeks later they said that God has said clearly they are to join us!! This is so exciting!! They have the same heart, have good experience in church leadership as well as having the perfect match of gifting. La Zubia is at 1000m altitude so we will get snow in winter; their children don't know anything about our plans but a few weeks ago said to Kelly, their mum, 'mummy we want to live by the snow'!! There have been many more amazing confirmations I could share, we are so amazed by God's kindness and attention to detail!

Where will we live?

Another part of the vision is to have a place with more space and a garden. For the boys to enjoy as they are growing and also, because of the steady flow of people visiting, we want a place where we can host people. Our dream is to have a house with space for family, visiting teams, interns, people who need somewhere to stay and to have an open house for the community to come and share with us. We believe that it is the time to buy somewhere that we can call home and put our stamp on. We have been looking in a very specific area of La Zubia and there are very few places available fitting our criteria. Amazingly one came up in the exact road we wanted, with everything on our wish list.

Even more than that, having publicised this house really badly for a year with 3 blurry photos, the owner has just dropped the price significantly. I visited this house back in June it has the potential to do everything we hope for. We are happy living in a small flat if God asks us but we know what He has called us to and how we want to live in this new place. This house has 4 bedrooms with a potential 5th, large downstairs space for family and church meetings and a good amount of outside space. The views from the bedrooms windows are forests and snow capped mountains! Now comes to faith part!! The owner is not open to renting to us and we can't get a mortgage; based on our current financial situation we are un-lendable to, the banks don't understand Gods economy!! So we find ourselves needing around £150k that we don't have but having a sense that God is in this, so we trust Him! Next Friday we travel to Granada for 5 days with Dave & Kelly and we will meet the owner on the Sunday. Please pray for divine favour and a clear way forward for us. We need this sorted as soon as possible as everything will be built around our home and it's not long now until we move.

What will happen to the ministry in Puzol?

It is with mixed feelings that we prepare for this move. We have many friends here and have invested so much love, sweat and tears that it will be very hard to leave. At the same time there is a growing excitement and sense that we are moving into something that God has arranged for us. The churches in Puzol and Massamagrell have been handed over to local leadership as has the ministry to sex workers in Barrio Carmen, Valencia. I have been working hard over the past year to build a team in Naquera and the train up potential leaders to steward the work there. As this is a church of currently unsaved and very new Christians there are no obvious indigenous leaders who could pastor this church. The team can run meetings but church is so much more than this. Please pray for someone to step up and take on this work, someone who has a passion for these people. We also desperately need people who can drive. Although it is hard to leave the church in Naquera it is the Holy Spirit's work, not ours, and we know what He started He will look after and bring to completion!

What will our relationships with supporters look like?

We would like to thank you with all our hearts for journeying with us over the last 5 years. Thank you for your prayers, encouragement, and financial support without which we could not have been here. We are excited to journey with you in this next adventure, we are so grateful for quality relationships with you which cross, ministry, cultural and denomination boundaries and unite us in a desire to see the forgotten people of Spain have an encounter with their Heavenly Father. If any for you have further questions regarding any aspect of this move please feel free to e-mail us. We really welcome prophetic words and any encouragement you may have. As in so much of life, we don't really know what we are doing or what the future will look like. We just know that if Jesus says 'it's good' we want to be part of it!

God bless you and thank you for being a part of this,

Love Chris, Liz, Leo & Samuel