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Olá precious prayer partners,

This month marks 4 years since we first arrived in Portugal together. Our expressions in the photo below perfectly capture the varied emotions experienced during that time - trepidation, shock, gladness, amongst other things! We are over the hump of adaptation and feeling quite settled into life and ministry. **We thank God for his faithfulness to his promises in Matthew 28:19-20 of being with us as we seek to make disciples** in the nation of Portugal. Would you join us in praising God for the work he has done in us and through us over these years, and pray he may sustain us for many more years of service?

You, as our prayer partners are one of the means God has used to sustain us in those 4 years, we are so grateful for you!

With love in Christ, Emily and Sam.



Storms rip through Portugal

Portugal has experienced a difficult month of extreme weather. **Coimbra was among the hardest-hit areas, first struck by a severe storm in early February with winds that surpassed 150 km/h, followed by heavy rainfall and widespread flooding.** The local river overflowed into residential areas, and the dam reached 99% capacity. At least 16 people have died, with thousands evacuated and many still unable to return home due

to extensive damage. Recovery will take a long time. We are safe and were not been greatly affected. All this has been a reminder of our helplessness before God and need to turn to Him!



A snapshot of the destruction: Left, high winds snapped trees, blocking a highways. Right, a historic Catholic church in Coimbra submerged by floodwaters.

Semester 2 in motion

Semester 2 has begun, and we had encouraging planning days with the GBU Coimbra leadership team (pictured below). **Plans for the semester include a Mission Week (read more below), evangelistic bible studies in John, weekly public talks (including a mini-series in Ecclesiastes), socials, and Sam running the Bible Study Leaders training course again.**

It's been encouraging to see student leaders grow in their leadership skills and prioritise the study of the bible and gospel proclamation. **Whilst many great plans have been made, we remember Proverbs 19:21 "Many are the plans of a man's heart but it's the Lord's purpose that prevails"**. Please pray that we may hold our plans with open hands, trusting God to direct our steps and accomplish His purposes.



(Re)think!

(Re)think is the theme of this semester's mission week from March 9-12. It will be a time of heightened evangelism, with four evenings of public talks and debates that clearly and thoughtfully present the good news of Jesus as students are rethink: morality, Christianity, the Bible, and death. We will be running evangelistic bible studies in the book of John the weeks after for those who have expressed interest in finding out more.

Helping the students to plan the week has at times been challenging but also has provided lots of practical teaching opportunities - how to run meetings, how to raise prayer and financial support for a project, how to create systems of follow-up, how to recruit people to help.. all while remaining prayerfully dependent on the Lord. Overall it's encouraging to see the genuine heart most students have to share the gospel with their friends and be Christ's ambassadors in the university. **Street evangelism will be part of the mission week, so Sam is running a training on 'how to have salty conversations' the week before.**



Poster for the GBU Mission week, themed Rethink or 'Repensa' in Portuguese.

Christianity Explored at Church

In God's answer to your prayers from our last newsletter, the December Christmas events at church were well attended with lots of visitors, including a GBU student, Beatriz. She has since been attending regularly, after having been looking for a local church to attend for the last 2 years! **Our church is also running a Christianity Explored course, with several people coming along to ask the big questions of life and the Christian faith.** Em is a discussion leader, which has been very stretching for her Portuguese!



Attendees at the Christianity Explored course.

Family Update



Sam is thankful for a much more sustainable pace of GBU ministry, largely thanks to Emily and Shane (ECM missionary from Ireland) now sharing more of the load. He's been freed up to spend more quality time with his family, which he greatly enjoys. Pictured is Sam with his dad and Oli planting olive trees on his grandparent's farm. God willing, one day they will produce olives from which we can make our own olive oil!



Em has been enjoying exploring the flea markets in Portugal, and has a little group of friends from a local café and from church that she does this with (pictured). **Having a fun hobby and friends to enjoy it with is a big answer to prayer.** It has made life in Portugal much more enjoyable!



Oli continues to be an energetic boy who loves riding his bike, jumping, climbing and dancing. Em has made a point of introducing him to some quintessentially Australian favourites, like The Wiggles and Bluey. He has been going to daycare part-time, with lovely educators, which is a kind provision from God.

Prayer Points

- Praise God for these last 4 years in Portugal, for all that he has done in us and through us. Pray He may sustain us for many more years of service.
- Pray for the recovery of Portugal after significant storms. Pray for safety and wisdom for emergency workers and authorities, that Christians can be a faithful witness of Christ's care and compassion as we seek to love our neighbours in practical ways.
- Pray that God will bear eternal fruit from all the activities planned from GBU Coimbra in semester 2. Please pray that we may hold our plans with open hands, trusting God to direct our steps and accomplish His purposes.
- Pray for the GBU Mission week from March 9-12. Pray that GBU students will be bold in inviting friends, for smooth logistics during the week, that the gospel will be clearly preached and students may have soft hearts to hear and respond in repentance and faith!
- Pray for the people doing the Christianity Explored course at church. Pray they would see Jesus clearly and want to follow him.

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We are serving with European Christian Mission ([ECM](http://ecmaustralia.org)). ECM's vision is to see the peoples of Europe transformed in the name of Jesus Christ through evangelism, discipleship and church planting in partnership with local believers across Europe.