

Caring for Ireland

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Journey | magazine

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orthern Ireland has had a strong evangelical, notably Assembly, presence in its modern history. The Republic of Ireland in the south has been a far different story. Being one of the most Roman Catholic countries in the English-speaking world, its resistance to evangelical missions has been both pervasive and adamant.





Emmaus student and TnT Team member Esther Andre shares the gospel in Dublin.

However, all of that is changing. Ireland has joined the European Union, resulting in an economic boom and extensive immigration. This, along with the abuse and other scandals that have rocked the Catholic Church, has opened up the south of Ireland to new ideas. Unfortunately, those new ideas include not just the gospel of grace but also materialism, secularism, and the host of other “isms” and cults that so infect our globe.

My interest in the Lord’s work in Ireland began in 1988 when my family went to the Dublin area for six weeks to help spread the gospel through literature distribution and door-to-door visitation. Currently I am involved on a yearly basis with TnT (Teach and Testify) Teams, a short-term missions ministry designed to provide assemblies and missionaries in the Irish Republic with strategic help in the areas of literature distribution, open-air evangelism, door-to-door Bible dis-

tribution and witnessing. As well, the teams are a great encouragement to the relatively small groups of believers in their local meetings. (More information can be found at www.TnTTeams.org). The 25-day program begins with a 4-5 day period of cross-cultural orientation and evangelism training. Team members, ranging in age from “18 to 80,” are prepared for the ministry by local missionaries and Irish workers and elders. Then teams of 8-9, with their own minibus (van) team up with missionaries and assemblies for 17 days of intensive service in places like Dublin, Shankill, Bray, Kilkenny, Newcastle West, Waterford, and Athlone. In addition, there is opportunity for those gifted in teaching and speaking to preach or teach seminars and other types of discipleship ministry. The benefits are immediate in terms of Irish evangelism and long-term for the Irish church, for Irish believers and TnT Teams members alike. The final

3 days of the program take the form of a team tour of the south and southwestern parts of the country.

The unique feature of the TnT Teams mission is that it offers the participants a truly cross-cultural experience—Ireland really is a different culture—while affording the opportunity to be involved in significant ministry due to the absence of the language barrier so prevalent in most short-term situations (well, almost no language barrier; one must deal with colloquialisms and accents). While most conceive of missions as long-term commitments involving extensive preparation and significant amounts of resources, short-term projects such as TnT Teams are in fact quite biblical (even the apostle Paul’s ministry was largely short-term in one sense). Time commitment is relatively short (just 25 days) but benefits are far-reaching in terms of what happens both in Ireland and in the lives of the team members.

What can you do in caring for Ireland?

You can read.

So many people I meet say that they have always wanted to go to Ireland. This desire may come from their family background or it may be due to the mystique surrounding the “Land of Saints and Scholars.” For whatever reason, Ireland and the Irish have come to have a special place in the minds and hearts of many. When these kinds of “attractions” are evident I often ask the people expressing them whether God may have been preparing them for a more direct involvement with this country and its people. If you are reading this article you have some kind of interest in Ireland. Why not expand your understanding of Ireland’s history and its effect on western culture in general? If you are like most, you will find yourself stirred by Ireland’s long and arduous history and by its present need.

You can pray.

Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers into His harvest (Matthew 9:37). There are far more opportunities in Ireland to sow and water the seed of the Word than are being met; not only to the Irish, but to the vast number of immigrants— economic refugees from eastern Europe and political refugees from Africa—who are flooding into this now economically advantaged country. This includes praying for those who may wish to go but have personal, financial, or circumstantial obstacles to overcome in order to do so. You can pray for those in Ireland who are planning for this summer’s ministry and as they labor day to day.

You can go.

Be ready to be the answer to your own prayer for laborers for the harvest. You

don’t have to stay home. While it may seem like a gigantic undertaking at first, in many ways it will be less effort and less cost than some vacations. And the rewards will be far greater. Think about it. You can go on your own and plug into TnT Teams or you could organize a group from your local church. Why not go ahead and get your passport now? Then you will be ready when God has removed that last barrier and opened the door!

You can give.

Sometimes going ourselves is simply not possible. But for many who would go, finances loom as a sizeable obstacle. While this is really the easiest obstacle for God to remove, it usually seems like the greatest one to us. Ask the Lord to direct you in your giving for Ireland, if He is burdening your heart for this country. You may know of someone who would like to go but is hesitating due to finances (ranging from the immediate funds to the need to work, etc.). There are many other ways to be involved financially including helping with expenses for literature and general team needs. Contact ron.hampton@TnTTeams.org for additional information about this.

You can support.

Even though the Irish economy is booming, this does not mean that missionaries there are having an easy time of it. The U.S. dollar continues to take a beating against European currencies, putting a severe strain on those who are dependent on North American Christians for their support. The cost of living is high; yet missionaries find their financial resources shrinking simply due to the exchange rate. If you as an individual or a church are currently

supporting missionaries overseas, review what you are giving. If it is still what it was 10 years ago, last year, or even last month, consider increasing the amount. Most missionaries are extremely hesitant to discuss this with their supporters, even though it is often their most stressful challenge on “the field.”

Caring for Ireland through short-term missions presents challenges and requires focused commitment. However, it also offers the opportunity to see immediate results in a people who share our own cultural heritage, who have contributed so much to Western civilization, but from whom so much has been withheld in terms of access to the freedom found only in the gospel of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. †



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Jim received his undergraduate degree in Economics at Luther College and went on to receive a ThM in Old Testament Literature and Exegesis and a PhD in Bible

Exposition from Dallas Theological Seminary. Jim served for 15 years as a commended worker at Clareview Bible Chapel in Edmonton, Alberta and has served on short-term mission trips in Ireland and Albania. Jim and his wife Kathy joined the faculty at Emmaus in 2002. They have four grown children and 4 grandchildren.

