

Carol Smith. My life in Spain.

Question: What took you to Spain in the first place; what was it like?

Two years before retirement age my husband and I were offered jobs, me as house-keeper and him as gardener in a big villa on the Costa del Sol between Estepona and Marbella. For us, it was too hot in the summer; we wanted to live inland, and I wanted a church to be close to. We saw a notice in a bookshop for an English church starting up in the back room of the Catholic Church, meeting there every two weeks, and in between in people's houses. Unfortunately, there was resentment from locals and eventually the church was pushed out. My husband took on the pastorship, but it became very difficult, and we moved in due course to Antequera. Completely by chance in a car park, we met Bernardo, the pastor of the evangelical Centro Cristiano—he felt badly for the English without a church, and welcomed us with open arms, gave us a room to use and mentored the church's establishment. It took 5 to 6 years of growth to reach about 20 members, and thereafter it declined a bit. The Spanish church was growing very well. We were happy and things were going on fine until my husband sadly died, and I returned to England three years ago.

Question: Your expectations?

Unexpected, was the heat of the summer which we didn't like, until September. Also unexpected was us running the church and we very much enjoyed being part of the church and learning about all things Spanish.

Question: And what were the best and worst bits?

We loved our life in Spain and I do miss it now. I love the Spanish people, so welcoming, so friendly. Worst was the overwhelming heat of the summer, and missing family, seeing grandchildren grow up. We were away 12 years

Question: And what would be your main message?

We were very surprised by the strength and growth of the evangelical church in Spain especially amongst the young. The young are much more open to religion than in the UK. Our perception here is of the country being very catholic, but there is room for growth in our area too. The Spanish are much more open to religion. This is a lesson for us.

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FEBRUARY – MARCH 2017 SERVICES & MEETINGS

05 Feb	10.30 Café Service—Sara and Claire
12 Feb	10.30 Bernard Crabb
19 Feb	10.30 Rev Sarah Simpson
26 Feb	10.30 Rev Sarah Simpson HC, followed by Church Meeting
03 March	—Friday 7pm Womens' World Day of Prayer Service Rev Sarah Simpson and Sara Crabb
05 March	10.30 Café Service - Rev Sarah Simpson and Sara
12 March	to be confirmed
19 March	10.30 Rev Sarah Simpson
26 March	10.30 Spring School Sunday Bernard Crabb HC
02 April	10.30 Terry Riches
09 April	10.30 Palm Sunday Cafe Style Worship — Claire and Sara
14 April	—Good Friday 10.30 Rev Sarah Simpson Reflective Worship followed by CTIM March of Witness , and service
16 April	10.30 Easter Sunday Rev Sarah Simpson HC



Murmurings from the Manse

Reconciliation was the theme of this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. It had plenty within it to encourage thought and debate, so much so that I am still thinking about it!

Reconciliation is one of those words which has many levels of understanding - the idea of reconciliation is even broader, but my thoughts, in the light of the event which took place several weeks ago in America, turn to internal reconciliation within countries. How can countries so definitely split come back together, be it over President Trump or Brexit or any other differences, and yet it can be done.

Remember the Truth and Reconciliation committee in South Africa, under the leadership of Desmond Tutu ... the work they did, the words spoken in the pain and sorrow, the tears and the apologies: remember the split caused by apartheid, so definite but not final, the work was harrowing for all involved but because the desire to be united was stronger than what kept the nation apart, there was success.

What do we need to be reconciled to, in our personal lives or in our communities, or politically? What keeps us from enjoying right relationships?

Whatever keeps us from another also keeps us from God, until we are reconciled to another, our relationship with God will not be all we know it can be.

Think about reconciliation

Yours in Christ

Sarah

CHRISTMAS VOUCHERS AND FOOD BAGS

The Churches raised just over £2660 and were able to help 64 local families, which was great. Food bank distributed an additional two food bags to these families and also extra bags to other families in need.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE in 2016

Our average attendance rose during 2016 to 33. The biggest average increase came in Cafe Church attendance.

Sarah has been able to take at least two services a month – continuity of worship has been greatly improved.

CHURCHES TOGETHER UNITY WEEK

Jan 17th to 22nd 2017

Numbers attending the mid-day meetings in the Hub and the final service at St Aldhelm's increased by over one third.

All agreed that it was so worthwhile meeting fellow Christians and more contact was very desirable.

BIRTHDAYS

February

June Dolan	3rd
Graham Allnatt	14th
June Rose	15th
Ben Edmeston	23rd

March

Margaret Flood	24th
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