

January 17, 2019  
Hello Immanuel Family!

Before I talk about where I am now (Robertson, South Africa), I want hit rewind and go back to Spain. In November I returned to the Camino and Oasis Trails in Northern Spain. The albergue was closed and so we spent a few days cleaning and packing it up for the winter. As a team we had daily meetings where we covered a variety of topics, both practical and spiritual. We spent time reflecting on the season and discussing how to improve things - ranging from volunteer training to sharing our faith with the pilgrims. We also spent time daily in prayer and worship, coming before God as a team and seeking his face.



We had a visitor from the Netherlands come in November as well. She is currently living in a group home and for her, coming to visit us was a big step of independence. It was a joy to be able to love her and bless her and accept her just as she is. For me that was a big highlight and really showed me what a safe place our community is for people who are struggling, either with their faith or just with life in general.

One of the projects I worked on in November was to make a video for Oasis Trails that would share the vision of purchasing a monastery in the neighboring village of Barbarin. This has been a dream of the Bouwman's for over a year now, and it is started to take shape. Our community is growing and the monastery in Barbarin would be a great place to house all of the volunteers, visitors, and even pilgrims who would like to stay for more than one night in the albergue. We would continue to run the albergue, but our housing would be consolidated into one place instead of three houses (which is what we are currently doing).

To watch the video, follow this link: <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=JsON8xPYnZA>. If you are interested in knowing more about this project, please let me know! Also, if you are interested in volunteering with us, or visiting us, please let me know and I can give you more information on what that looks like!

I will be heading back to Spain in March (because I do not have a residence visa, I am there on a tourist visa and have to plan out my time carefully) and we will start preparing for the albergue to

open in April. The weekend of March 15 - 17 we will host a gathering of Christian ministries that are along the Camino. Every year these organizations get together to pray and worship and fellowship before the opening of the "season." This year we get to host it!

Please pray for volunteers for the 2019 season, and also for people to join our long-term team. Please pray for the Barbarin Monastery project and that God would provide all that is needed - people, finances, permits, etc. Please pray for opportunities for our team to build relationships with Spaniards. We mainly minister to pilgrims and volunteers, but it's on our heart to also reach out to local people. And please pray for a residence visa. Currently I can only be in Spain for 90 days in a 180-day period which means I cannot be there for the whole season. It's difficult to get a visa but we are believing God will make a way. Until then I will take advantage of having to leave and use my travels for His Kingdom...which leads me to South Africa!

I arrived in Robertson, South Africa on December 19, in time for the annual Christmas BBQ that my friends Mike and Carolyn have hosting in front of their house for four years. In years past we've gone out into the streets to invite people, this year there was about 40 men, women, and children already sitting at the tables when we fired up the grill. We served about 100 meals and had the opportunity to pray for people and hand out clothing as well.



When I was in Robertson two years ago visiting Mike and Carolynn, they had a little shop in the front of their house where they sold baked goods and other basic items. They used it as a way to connect with the community and as a way to employ someone and give them baking skills. The employee that they poured into the most, Me-ann, had never had a job before. Me-ann now works at the most well-known bakery in town. During that same time that I was here, Carolynn had it on her heart to start doing some kind of ministry with children. We tried having a kid's club at their house. We made a program with games and handed out fliers and invited people. It never took off. We tried to have a Mommy and Me class in a low-income neighborhood. That didn't really go anywhere either. Mike and Carolynn pursued buying property in that low-income neighborhood in order to start a preschool. There were a lot of barriers and complications to that, so in the end Carolynn had an informal "playschool" at their house three mornings a week with two of her own children and three others. On January 9, 2019, The Robertson Early Childhood Center opened - in Mike and Carolynn's house. What used to be the shop has been transformed into a classroom, and their dining room has

become an art center along with a place for the twelve kids to eat their snack and lunch.

Over the last couple weeks of December and first week of January the classroom was completed, kids started enrolling, policies were written, and on January 9, a dream became a reality. What a blessing it has been to be here and see the fruition of a vision that started forming a couple of years ago! It's been a joy to play with the kids and to help out in the preschool. God's timing of this trip was perfect.





It has also been great spending time with Mike and Carolyn's four kids, they were on summer vacation from school, so we had time to play games, go hiking, visit with friends, etc. We continued traditions started three years ago and started some new ones as well.





I have one week left in Robertson. I'm grateful for the time here and for my friendship with Mike and Carolynn! Please pray for them as they walk by faith!

I'm trusting that 2019 is going to be an amazing year. I believe that there will be much fruit this year and it will be full of His glory! Thank you for your prayers and words of encouragement! I love hearing from you, so please don't hesitate to write - especially if there's something I can be praying for you!!!

Be blessed,  
Michele