

The Skirtons

Serving with



Winter 2019



Dear Friends,

Thank you for your faithful prayers and support for our family through 2019. We have had a wonderful and very full few months since we last wrote in the summer and hope this special end of year prayer letter will update you on our ministry as well as family life.

Matthew Writes ...

I stood and gazed at the tree. That was it, the exact same tree I had sat and prayed under 27 years earlier! I was brought back to the present as a volleyball flew past me and glancing around, I saw some of the 4000 young people who were attending OM's summer Teen Street event in Offenburg, Germany.

It was at a mobilising event for young people called Love Europe in 1992 that I had my first experience of missions and my eyes began to be opened to the needs of people around the world. Twenty-seven years ago, I, as a student, had first felt the call to live my life to help reach those who have never heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. Now some of the next generation of potential missionaries were sitting under the same tree that I had sat under, studying God's Word and considering His calling on their lives. Among the thousands of young people at Teen Street this summer, somewhere, were our five children, having fun, worshipping, studying God's word and, hopefully, growing in their faith.

What a blessing it was to be back at TeenStreet as a family this last summer! Please pray with us that many more teenagers would attend next summer and have the opportunity to grown in their faith and learn how God can use them in His Mission to the world.

Hanna's Gap Year

Hanna returned from South Africa just in time for Christmas, having spent a month serving with a team reaching out to underprivileged children in Cape Town. She also helped at the first ever Teen Street in Zimbabwe where she led a discipleship group for teenage girls. Her Gap Year so far has also included ministry among Afghan refugees in Greece, an outreach to Moldova, Teen Street Germany and a memorable trek in the Himalayas to raise awareness for OM's ministry among HIV/AIDS victims. Into 2020, Hanna will head to Romania & Moldova for the MDT Eastern Europe Extreme — a programme that we envisioned back in 2013, but was only launched in 2016 after we had left Moldova. It is incredibly encouraging to see Hanna serve with OM, especially as she heads back to our former home to share the love of Jesus, whilst also being discipled and growing in her faith.



For more information about Hanna's Gap Year and how you can follow and support her, please follow this link: <https://www.uk.om.org/appeal/hanna-skirton>



At home with the Skirtons ...

It is an adjustment for us all with Hanna having left home. She does keep coming back between mission assignments, and we are looking forward to spending Christmas and New Year together before she heads off for six months in mid-January and then on to Liverpool university to study Law in September.

Lydia completes her A-levels in 2020 and has University places on offer from Sussex and Royal Holloway, to study Maths. She also is prayerfully considering a Gap Year serving with OM, but details are to be confirmed. All of our girls enjoy working on Saturdays at a local Christian café.



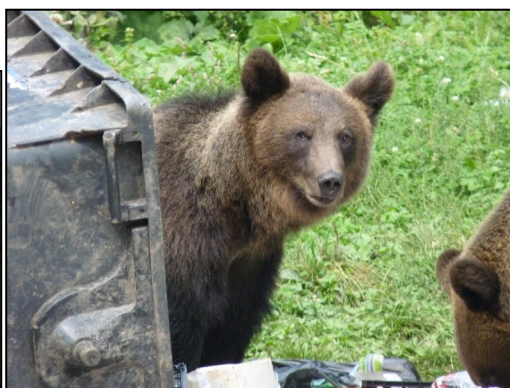
Rachel is working hard towards her GCSEs in May, whilst the boys also continue to work hard at school and enjoy playing football in their free time. We thank God for the good health and protection that He has given us all through this last year with only a few colds and bugs to deal with.

Thank you for your continued prayers, especially for the children, as they work hard at school, college, prepare for exams, but also seek to grow in their faith and knowledge of our Lord Jesus.

Summer Highlights...



Hiking in Lichtenstein



Bear watching in Romania



Feeding pigeons in Venice

Logos Hope Visit to the UK

We are working hard towards bringing the OM ship, Logos Hope, to the UK from mid-October 2020 through until mid-January 2021. We hope to see some 150,000 Christians come on board the ship during her three months in the UK and it is our prayer that many will be mobilised and inspired to engage some way in living a more missional lifestyle. We also of course pray for many who do not yet know Jesus to join us on board and learn more about Jesus' love.

We have confirmation from ports in Cardiff, Belfast, Merseyside and Edinburgh but are still awaiting to hear whether we can bring the ship into the heart of London, so please do pray with us for this. A significant part of Matthew's time is involved in working with different steering and planning groups, so we value your prayers for this incredible opportunity before us in 2020 and look forward to meeting many of you on board!



Eu, misionar?

Matthew's book "Missionary, Me?", describing his first years on the mission field, has been translated into Romanian and we hope will be printed in time for OM Moldova's 25th Anniversary. Yes, next summer marks 25 years since we first travelled to Moldova! We both hope to attend a special time of thanksgiving and celebration with the OM Moldova team in May 2020.



We are excited to see Hanna follow in our footsteps, getting involved in mission work and are delighted that she has joined OM this year. However, we recognise that mission agencies, including OM, are seeing a significant decline in numbers of people who want to engage in cross cultural missionary work. We have still seen hundreds from UK join OM through for short term mission work this year and 30+ new recruits have joined the 400 other Brits serving with OM teams around the world. Our latest Missions Discipleship Programme (MDT) was also one of the highlights of recent months with ten young people graduating and being sent out to serve with OM teams in the UK and further afield. However, we long to see even more people inspired and engaged in mission work among peoples who are yet to hear of Christ's love and so ask for your continued prayers with us that we would see more people sent out into the harvest field.

After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Revelation 7 vs 9-10



Is mission work and sharing the Gospel just for a chosen few? Is it just those with 'that special missionary call' who have the responsibility to share the Gospel with all peoples?

The whole of scripture speaks of God's Mission to His world. As God the Father sent Jesus the Son into the world, so, Jesus sends us out also (John 20v21). Mission is not a special calling only for a handful of Christians, who, after being challenged to be obedient to certain commissioning verses, have "gone out and got involved in mission work". Rather, all Jesus followers are called to share in God's Mission; His great overarching purpose, the redemption of fallen humankind and the bringing together of Christ's eternal Bride the Church. God's Mission is ultimately that all 'ethne', all peoples, glorify God and worship the Lamb who was slain. All of us then who claim to follow Jesus should be involved in some way in seeking to share the Gospel with all peoples. That's right! We all, as followers of Jesus, have a role to play in demonstrating and proclaiming the love of God to the nations; whether we are missionaries sent out from a local church, members of the clergy, students, teachers, medical, business or other professionals, carers, stay at home parents or pensioners; **we all are sent into the world to witness to all peoples the extraordinary love and forgiveness of God found only in His Son Jesus Christ.**

We long to see more Christians passionately on fire for Jesus and mobilised to take the Good News to the nations. Whilst we sometimes try to come up with new models, innovative programmes and initiatives in order to inspire and mobilise more people to engage in God's Mission, especially among those who are yet to hear, we wonder if *the* problem is actually that less and less of us today are taking up the cross, forsaking all else, utterly in love with and eyes fixed on Jesus alone. We recognise our own weakness in this and see that so often we have wrong priorities in our own lives. We are challenged by what John Stott wrote, "*The*

highest of missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God . . .), but rather zeal—burning and passionate zeal—for the glory of Jesus Christ. . . . Only one imperialism is Christian . . . and that is concern for His Imperial Majesty Jesus Christ, and for the glory of his empire." **As we long to see more Christians inspired and mobilised to engage in God's Mission, please pray with us that we all, who call ourselves followers of Jesus, would draw closer to Him, be more passionately on fire for Him, filled with zeal and so, be motivated to engage even more wholeheartedly in God's Mission to His world!**





pray

January

- 5th Matthew Preaching St Andrew's, Leyland
- 7th-9th Leadership Meetings
- 13th ff Appraisals with leadership team
- 14th Logos Hope Planning Meeting
- 16-17th London Meetings with other Agencies
- 20th Hanna leaves for New Recruits Conference
- 23rd Matthew teaching at MDT, Birmingham
- 28th-29th London Meetings TBC

February

- 2nd Eastleigh Baptist Missions Sunday
- 5th Board Meeting
- 6th Leadership Meetings



- 12-14th Matthew in Laos visiting Mekong ministries
- 14th – 19th ILM in Thailand
- 26th Leadership Meeting Birmingham
- Evening Global Prayer Meeting

March

- 1st Youth Evening, St Mary's Upton Wirral
- 10th Leadership week
- 13th-15th Missions Weekend, Truro
- 19th Prayer Emphasis Day
- 22nd Ascot Life Church
- 26th Global Prayer meeting

Personal Support Update

We would like to thank you for your continued prayer, encouragement and financial support for us as a family and also for Hanna as she takes her first steps independently from the family. Thank you for praying for our financial support situation that we wrote about in our last prayer letter. We have seen some progress but still need to see an increase in monthly giving to cover our costs.



give

Would you prayerfully consider joining our support team? Please follow this link to our personal support page where you can make a donation or set up a direct debit. <https://www.uk.om.org/skirton>

**Thank you for your continued partnership
with us!**

**With love from,
Matthew, Helen, Hanna, Lydia,
Rachel, David and James**



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Oswestry, Shropshire SY10 7LT or online at <https://www.uk.om.org/skirton>



pray



give



go