## UK Community Testimonies: Swansea Witnessing, Eternal Love and YSP Kosovo

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www,youtube,com/watch?v=qYRCgGOOc1s

> Three community members of Holy Community share testimonies: a Swansea witnessing trip with Elias that opened doors to Sikh and Eritrean friends, reflections on eternal love after looking through old family photos, and a YSP service trip to Kosovo.



It was really good to have Elias come to Swansea, and we joined the witnessing, as has been happening in many cities. I was witnessing along Oxford Street, going around the block, and we met a few people. One was a Muslim from Syria, who said he'd decided not to believe in God, after once being a strong believer. He didn't want to go into detail, but I still felt God was there - reaching out to him through us. We also met a young Sikh student who'd recently come from India.

In Castle Square my colleague noticed a young man named Samuel sitting on the steps with a bicycle. She started talking with him, and we ended up exchanging numbers with both Samuel and the Sikh student. During the week we prayed for them, and I sent messages on WhatsApp. They replied - that was encouraging. As the week went on I'd message and sometimes hear nothing back, and negative thoughts would creep in: maybe they've blocked me, maybe they looked online and read all that negativity about us. I just kept praying. Towards the end of the week another reply came in, which was amazing. I realised that just because someone isn't online doesn't mean they've cut you off - they may just not have Wi-Fi. One of them is from Eritrea, a refugee working as a delivery person every day to make money. On Sundays he goes to his Eritrean Orthodox church in Swansea, visits friends, and plays football. We play football too, so maybe he can join us one day.

With the Sikh brother, I really wanted to visit a Sikh temple, the Gurdwara. I'd walked past one many times, but never had the courage to call them on my own. I asked him when we could go on a Sunday, and we went last week. In the meantime Sarah did a lot of research - I didn't know anything about Sikhism. It comes from the Punjab. It was in some sense an extension of the Abrahamic tradition, founded in the 15th century, when the Punjab came into contact with the Muslims, bringing a new understanding of one God to a primarily Hindu people.

We didn't know what to expect, but the language was something I could share with them, so we could communicate. The Gurdwara was an old chapel they'd taken over. Everyone sits on the floor, women on one side and men on the other, with their scripture in the centre. You walk in, bow to the scripture - not to the book itself, but to what's within - give a donation if you want, and take your seat. There was a band playing hymns with very simple words, referring to God as Mother and Father. There was a lot of spirit there. They served breakfast in the morning, and lunch in the canteen downstairs after the service, everyone eating together. It was very uplifting.

What struck me was hearing them say, "You are my Father and you are my Mother." That's what Father

said - that God is our Mother and Father. I didn't know they were saying it the same way. It was a door opening into this culture, and I want to find out more. I'll buy a book and read up on it. What was once a barrier to talking to these people is no longer there…

With Samuel I've been sending little WhatsApp messages - good morning, God be with you. My relatives often send me good-morning Bible verses, so I just shared small things to keep the relationship going. One day driving to work I felt I should send him a message about the purpose of life. I did, and he replied: "Thank you so much, thank you for the Father's heart that you sent." He has a good Christian foundation - he's prepared. Progress is slow, like the seedlings we planted this year. Some of you have seedlings - once they germinate, the work really begins, taking care of them. These children of God need a lot of heart investment, watering, looking after. That's what our witnessing has to be.



Can I share something briefly? Kindle is preparing for a baby shower, and asked for old baby photos of Elliot. Out came the box of family photos. As I looked through them I thought: there's no rehearsal for being a kid. You make mistakes, you screw up. You become a teenager, you've never done it before, you muck it up. You become an adult, a partner, a parent - mistakes at every stage. But what I felt looking at those photos was so much love. They are just snapshots in time, and the love in them is what matters. Who cares about all the trauma and pain we went through? What's really eternal are the moments of love and connection. That's where God is.

There was a picture of my mum with her brothers and sisters, all long gone in the spirit world now. There was a picture of Elliot hugging Marina when they were really small. There've been a million fights and hurts since, but they don't matter - they wash away. What is eternal is not the pain, anger, fear, or mess-ups, but the love. It made me think: we are living in a material world bound by time and space, but it's an illusion. Photos from 30 years ago feel like yesterday. Time doesn't really exist - it's something we created. Space doesn't really exist either - one day we won't be bound by it. So thank you, Kindle. My first thought was: "where are those damn photos?" But it turned out to be a blessing. Elliot was a beautiful baby, and is a beautiful baby still.

There are things brewing in the background that you may not know about, especially among the second gen. Antti has several projects with YSP - one of his core objectives is to get the youth involved in God's plan, and help them grow as individuals, connecting more to themselves and to their communities, doing things rather than just showing up. Last year he went to Kosovo to help develop a YSP project there. A few months ago a few of us BCs - me, Alma, Jamie, our sister Philip, and Tanya - went together to Kosovo. It was my first time in that region. It's economically run-down, and most of the youth I spoke to wanted to move out. The aim of the project was to help them take more responsibility for their local communities, and see that they can make a difference.

The first few days we worked on an event where the youth from last year's project would present what they'd done. We canvassed university campuses to invite people, and going to a foreign country and handing out flyers in a rundown area was a unique experience. On the first day of flyering we didn't get a single rejection. Everyone stopped, smiled, and genuinely listened. I was so inspired, because in England people pretend they don't see you. They have a saying they're taught young - "My house is for God, and I am the guest." That puts them on the same level as anyone who approaches, and any guest is treated as the highest person.

We even went with CARP members to the biggest sports hall in the city. The sports manager, whom we'd never met, said, "Let me show you guys around." Every sport area invited us to join - table tennis, a taekwondo show with kids from five to eighteen, every age, every belt. Every place welcomed us, even though they owed us nothing. I'd never experienced so much warmth at home. I was also inspired that 15 to 20 new CARP members had joined in recent months. The young people had nothing to do between classes - some live out in the country - so they showed up at the CARP centre, spent time together, learned a bit of the teachings, and took responsibility. It was beautiful to see people who weren't members, but were so active, helping with the projects.



When I spoke to university students, all of them wanted to go abroad. They said there were no opportunities, and they couldn't make a difference. Kosovo is one of the youngest countries in the world - only 14 years after a war - so peace is very strong in their hearts. It's also a very young population, and if all the smart people leave, the country can't develop. In True Father's autobiography there's a chapter saying young people should love their country, and even when they study abroad think about bringing the knowledge home - because emigration alone leaves the country in poverty. It was a wonderful experience, and YSP UK is doing a great job.

Another thing Antti organised was a Divine Principle study with Mormon missionaries. They told us they commit from 9 am to 9 pm every day, for two years, to serving people - painting fences, helping wherever needed. Imagine doing that for two years. I don't think we do it with that same intensity. They are wonderful people, and I learned a lot from their determination. I'm really grateful for these opportunities, and felt God working through all of them.