

# Free Presbyterian Youth Council



'Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth' - Ecclesiastes 12:1

## REPORT ON 2008 SUMMER OUTREACH TO SPAIN

By Joanne Greer

Sitting "in darkness and in the shadow of death" – this is an apt description of the people of Spain. Hundreds of thousands are caught up in the cult of Mariolatry. Many of them now actually recognise the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church, but if anyone dares to speak against "their Virgin", they are immediately up in arms. Many towns or areas have their own "Virgin" (like a patron saint), around whom a legend has been devised and handed down through generations. In the area of the province of Jaen, where the Boyds and Joy Gillespie labour, one of these images is called "the Virgin of Cortes", and each year on Sept. 8, the statue is carried in a procession from a chapel to a sanctuary about 5 km away.

It was primarily to assist in evangelism at this pilgrimage that the Youth Council sent a team of eight young people to Spain from Sept. 3-10, 2008, four of whom were from the Ballymena congregation. Despite several incidents that could have hindered the work (our plane was struck by lightning on the way over, one of the girls broke her arm, and our van broke down twice), the Lord over-ruled in each of these events and even gave opportunities to witness as a result.

One of the barriers, of course, was that most of us knew little or no Spanish, but we sometimes found ways to circumvent this difficulty. For instance, Brian Lorimer learned how to say "Ye must be born again" in Spanish, and was able to quote it often while offering tracts to people. Jonny Blaney found John 3:16 in a Spanish NT in Joy's house, took it to a bricklayer who was working on the sidewalk outside the flat, and signed to him to read the verse. The man not only read v. 16, but continued to read aloud down the chapter, although his co-worker tried to stop him and finally walked away in disgust.

The people in the country areas where Joy works can be very suspicious of foreigners, especially those of the Protestant variety. Therefore we were surprised and thankful to get several opportunities to speak to people as we walked (or climbed) through the villages to put church invitations through the doors. Joanne Greer stopped with two small groups of children and witnessed to them using a book that we had made – each page was one of the colours of the wordless book and had a relevant verse on it in Spanish. Brian also used this book with an old man when he had run out of tracts – he simply pointed to each page and said the Spanish word for "repeat".

On the day of the pilgrimage itself, we did experience some opposition, especially around the chapel at the beginning of the procession, where the most devout worshippers seemed to gather. Andrew Houston, who was giving out tracts in that area, noticed the eerie darkness of the chapel and the rank idolatry in the images of Mary and Christ – always with Mary in the centre or the foreground. These devout people really resented us being there and some began to shout at us for daring to come to the festival. However, over 6000 tracts were given out on that day, and we pray that the Lord will see fit to use His Word to free these people from their superstition. Many had walked for days to reach the sanctuary, some on bare feet at least part of the way.

Pray for Spain – what is needed is a move of the Holy Spirit to open the people's eyes and turn them from idols to serve the living and true God.