

# Alfa & Omega a base camp for ministry in Spain

July 25, 2016

DENIA, Spain—When it comes to Christians sharing their faith, people in Spain want to see “real love through real people,” Pastor Antonio Calero Cerrado said.

That’s what they experience through the varied ministries connected with Alfa & Omega Camp in Denia.

For the past 40 years, Cerrado and Jorge Pastor have led Iglesia Bautista La Trinidad, a congregation that meets at the Baptist campground.

## Stretch Out Your Hand

✘ Pastor Antonio Calero Cerrado oversees the social ministries of Iglesia Evangelica Bautista La Trinidad and ministers to community members who receive help. (Photos / Kalie Lowrie) In downtown Denia, the church operates a community ministry, Extiende tu Mano—Stretch Out Your Hand. The ministry provides services to individuals and families in the community, including counseling, legal services, addiction-recovery programs, and food and clothing assistance.

The [Texas Baptist Hunger Offering](#) provides funds to help support the ministries, including a Monday-through-Friday lunch program that serves 30 to 40 people, many of them homeless.

The volunteers from the church who cook and serve the meals emphasize the importance of protecting the self-respect of every person who receives assistance.

✘ Juan Jose Alcala receives food daily through the feeding ministry of Iglesia Evangelica Bautista La Trinidad in Denia. “They treat us as people,” said Juan Jose Alcala, a regular lunch client. “Outside on the street, they treat us really badly. Here, they treat us with love.”

### **Thriving ministries**

About 60 years ago, American missionaries established Alfa & Omega Camp on Spain’s southern coast. At the time, Christians in the region were persecuted for their faith, and Iglesia Evangelica Bautista La Trinidad began with just a handful of members.

✘ The Alfa & Omega Baptist camp has long history of connections with Texas Baptists and has enjoyed the support of many ministry groups this summer. Now, the church attracts about 400 worshippers each week, and the encampment is thriving. It is home to Spain’s only private evangelical Christian school, with more than 400 students. About 90 percent of the students are unbelievers, but by teaching courses on values and integrating faith and learning, faculty have many opportunities to share the love of Christ with students and families.

During the summer, hundreds of children and youth from around Spain attend organized camps on the grounds of Alfa & Omega.

✘ Go Now missionaries Naraim Enriquez (left) and Priscille Murphy (right) are serving at the Alfa & Omega Baptist camp in Denia, Spain for the summer.

### **Go Now Missions**

Priscille Murphy, a student at Texas A&M-Commerce, and Naraim Enriquez, a recent graduate of the University Texas at El Paso, are serving at Alfa & Omega Camp through Go Now Missions, the Baptist General Convention of Texas student missions program.

Beyond working with children every day, they also help with tasks ranging from cleaning dishes and mopping floors to setting up rooms for use.

✘ Priscille Murphy helps set up rooms for an incoming camp “One of the greatest things I’ve learned is more humility,” Murphy said. “Some of the work we do—like cleaning bathrooms—is not super fun. Even though it seems like it doesn’t matter, the Lord can still use it.”

Enriquez felt God’s call to serve in Spain following a trip to Mexico last summer and learning about the needs at the Alfa & Omega Camp during Go Now Missions’ Discovery Weekend. She wanted to serve overseas and work with children, and she speaks fluent Spanish, having grown up in Juarez, Mexico.

When she began discussing the possibility with her parents, they were reluctant to send her, but after praying a few weeks, they agreed she should go. Although fund-raising seemed daunting, God provided at every turn, she said.

### **Finding joy, learning lessons**

Enriquez has found great joy working with the preschool children each day.

“They aren’t my siblings or family, but I have a lot of love for them,” she said. “I care about them. It’s sharing God’s love through us—from him to them. We are their family from 8 to 5.”

The Go Now student missionaries have watched God use their experiences in Spain to teach them important lessons, they noted.

“During the first week I was here, a group of American students were here, and I wasn’t able to interact with them, but I prayed for them,” Murphy said. “When they were leaving, one of the girls said: ‘I want to thank you for your kindness. ... You encouraged me just seeing your service.’ Knowing

the Lord can use things you don't even view as important is amazing."

### **Children exposed to the gospel**

About a month into the Go Now student missionaries' time at the camp, Spanish school children finished their academic year, and the staff began making preparations for weekly campers to arrive.

One week, all the students were from the Denia area. Other weeks drew groups from around the country. Many of the campers are from Catholic homes; others are not involved in any faith tradition. The student missionaries helped lead activities, taught children and shared the love of Christ with all those they encountered.

"With the help of other churches from Texas, we were able to give the kids exposure to the gospel," Murphy said. "One thing that I really noticed was the power of music with the children. Christian songs are something that really stick with them. It was such a blessing, because there have been several times when I am playing with them on the playground, and I hear a group singing 'Jesus Loves Me' or 'This Little Light of Mine.' I am praying that the Lord would continue to grow the seeds planted here and produce lots of fruit in the lives of these children."

In addition to the student missionaries, other Texas Baptists have been involved with the camp this summer. First Baptist Church in McKinney sent a choir to perform at Iglesia Evangelica Bautista. Students from the Baptist Student Ministry at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley spent more than a week leading an English camp.

Baylor University has a longstanding partnership and sent a group of students to assist with camps. Dallas Baptist University recently established a partnership, and two students are serving as summer camp staff.