

where WORLDS meet

the monthly newsletter for the church of the nazarene in eurasia

YEAR 12, ISSUE 9 • NOVEMBER 2014

BULGARIAN CHURCH OPENS SMALL BUSINESS START-UP CENTER



Photo courtesy Jessica Morris

The Montana Church of the Nazarene, in northwest Bulgaria, opened a new compassionate ministry center in October to help roughly 30 candidates per year to navigate government regulations, licensing and grants to start small businesses.

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

Sergo Slavchov is the first member of his family in 10 generations to own land. And he has big dreams for his land on the outskirts of Montana, in northwest Bulgaria.

Slavchov and his wife, Daniella Evdokimova, (photo below right) are among the first participants in the Montana Church of the Nazarene's compassionate ministry center called New Opportunities. The center, which officially opened this month, will provide education, assistance and opportunities for selected applicants to take advantage of Bulgarian and European Union grants and funds to start private businesses.

In 2009, Bulgaria entered the European Union, which opened the doors wide for Bulgarians to emigrate to other more economically healthy places in Western Europe. But Montana, which was the birthplace of Communism in Bulgaria, is the poorest region of the entire European Union.

With widespread emigration, Montana's population has fallen sharply from 70,000 to the 40,000s, with mostly the elderly and children left behind. This only worsened the poverty and lack of jobs.

Slavchov and Evdokimova are two of those who have remained. Roma by ethnicity, for the past five years they have attended the Montana Church of the Nazarene, where they became believers. The couple works six months out of the year for an Italian agricultural firm,



Photo courtesy Gina Pottenger

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SABINE WIELK TURNS OVER NYI REINS

By Jenny Ward
Eurasia Region Communications

Rev. Sabine Wielk is stepping down from her 10-year leadership role as Eurasia Region NYI coordinator with Nazarene Youth International (NYI), to make room for a new generation. Previously she also served three years as NYI chairperson. During Wielk's decade-plus NYI involvement, she has helped shape Eurasia Region youth through being a fierce advocate, servant leader, encourager and loyal friend. This month we say goodbye to Wielk as she retires – a woman who continues to devote her life to God's kingdom and His people.

She will continue serving in the area of finance for the Eurasia Region, based at the regional office in Büsingen, Germany.

Nazarene Youth International, the youth ministry of the Church of the Nazarene, has an integral part in equipping and empowering young people for a dynamic life in Christ and for present and future leadership in the Church of the Nazarene. Founded in 1908, NYI currently is active in each world region and continues to provide an encouraging environment for thousands of young

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YOUR STORY
OUR STORY
GOD'S STORY

'I was determined'

Persecuted, but persistent

By
Gina Pottenger



Maiya was born into a very tiny village in eastern Nepal. When she was not even 2 years old, her father passed away. She was one of six children and her mother had a difficult time taking care of them alone. Maiya thought a lot about death and wondered if her mother would die and leave her, too. She began to be very afraid of death.

Because her mother was a sickly person, Maiya did different rituals in hopes of healing her mother but they didn't work. When she was in grade 11, she was fasting according to her religion, but during the fast, she fell and broke her left hand. She started to think there must be no god because while she was doing something good and religious, something bad happened to her.

When she was still in the 11th grade, a neighbor who was a Christian brought her to a church. During the service, a woman there testified that she was about to commit suicide, but the love of Jesus Christ brought her such peace that she decided to live.

Maiya was so touched by that testimony that she was ready to accept Christ soon after when a group of Christian men from the Nazarene church came to her house and shared the *JESUS*

film and presented the gospel.

Her decision made life harder for her. Her family persecuted her for her new faith. They scolded her frequently and threatened to throw her out of the house.

She had previously been teaching a group of illiterate people in her village, but when they heard she had become a Christian, all the students in her group quit coming and said they wanted nothing to do with her.

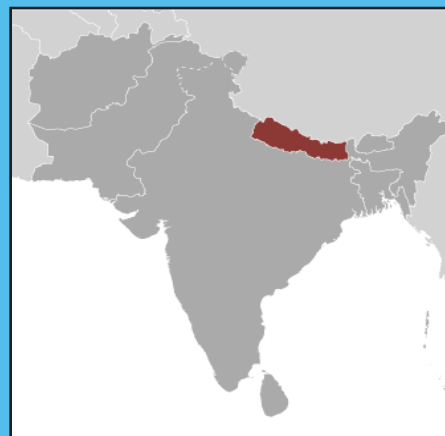
"I felt so [much] hurt, pain, but I was thinking whatever they may say, I was determined to lead my family members to God. In front of them I started living a good life and they started to notice my behavior or dealing with people."

One of her brothers saw a vision one day. He saw a fellowship of Christians gathered inside their house, praising God. His heart was instantly changed and following his transformation, more of the family members began to accept Christ.

Even though the whole village had rejected her, she decided to offer free education to the village children. Some children began to attend and they enjoyed it so much that the parents allowed them to continue. After a while, her loving example to the village began to win some people over. Today, nine

people gather from the village in her house, along with her family, to meet for regular worship. And the church in the village which started with four people now has 50 and they have built their own church building.

Maiya is also the official coordinator for a child development center which she started in her village, which is a ministry of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries. The children contributed five rupees each, every month, and now they have altogether collected 18,000 rupees (181 USD) which, combined with NCM funds, will start a child development center in another village. □



NYI: Wielk influenced youth of Eurasia

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Left: Sabine Wielk has served since she was elected 10 years ago as Eurasia Region NYI coordinator, and this fall is stepping down to make way for a new leader to take the reins. Above: Wielk and her regional council met for the last time together in Büsingen, Germany, where the team honored her with several meaningful gifts to say goodbye.

people globally.

The role of a regional coordinator ranges from “working with general church leadership and global events that have Eurasia participation” to “organizing, facilitating, teaching, encouraging, preaching, and helping the council and NYI around the region,” said Wielk.

As Deirdre Brower Latz, former NYI leader, said, “The role [is] to coordinate other people’s uniqueness” and “[Sabine] brought a diligence to it that drew people together.”

Brower-Latz, who is now the principal of Nazarene Theological College-Manchester, has been a close friend of Sabine’s for almost 20 years, but feels like she’s always known her.

“I’ve known [Sabine] since we were young women and had lots of vision and spice and enthusiasm and thought we could change the world,” said Brower Latz with a chuckle.

Throughout Wielk’s involvement with NYI, many strong bonds were formed with her council members, who were influenced in their own personal and spiritual growth by her example and character.

“It’s not just the things she did directly, but it’s all of the work and time she invested in people who have shaped NYI and the fields... there are so many jobs or tasks that are unknown that people maybe never even knew happened, but that

she did and does all the time,” said Tim Evans, 2005-2009 Eurasia Region NYI president.

Evans has also worked closely with Wielk for the past 10 years.

“When I was 18 or 19 I was asked to join the Eurasia NYI Council...Sabine invested hugely in me and I feel the benefit of that where I am today, both personally and professionally,” said Evans.

The people and the relationships are the heart of NYI, a core belief being that young people are significant in the Kingdom of God. Michelle Robinson, British Isles South District NYI secretary and Northern Europe Field NYI representative, is a testament to Wielk’s empowerment of young people.

“I wouldn’t have had the opportunities I’ve had if she wasn’t opening doors along the way. I see how she’s done that with others and it’s incredible,” said Robinson.

Christoph Nick, youth leader at Gelnhausen Church of the Nazarene, Germany, agrees.

“I still remember when she asked me to serve on the Regional NYI Council as interim co-vice president. I was just 18...but she saw something in me, that I didn’t see at that time and gave me the chance to grow, to make mistakes and experience.”

Empowering young people by opening doors and providing opportunities plays a large role in NYI,

but leading by example also has its merits.

“[Sabine’s] a servant leader and has shown us the way...I’m not afraid to go somewhere because she’s walked there before me or she’s walked with me,” Robinson said. “She is an advocate.”

So what makes Wielk so unique?

“It’s her German efficiency,” said Brower Latz, Robinson, Evans and Nick.

While the role of Eurasia Regional NYI coordinator kept Wielk busy with organizing various conferences, global events, and a million other little details, it was greatly rewarding as well. When asked what her favorite part of being coordinator was, she said: “Seeing young people develop their skills and gifts and grow in their faith and understanding of God’s kingdom. To see a shy 17-year-old wallflower blossom into becoming a national youth leader with international recognition. To see that and to speak and live into that somewhere between hugs, chocolates, and silly comments.”

Wielk will continue to carry the reins of NYI until the new Eurasia Regional NYI leader is selected and announced. *Where Worlds Meet* will profile the new leader in an upcoming edition. □

Albania sends short-term missionary to Philippines

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

When Bledar was praying for one month about being the first Albanian Nazarene to volunteer as a short-term mission worker in the Philippines, he realized he would not just be going there to help rebuild a Nazarene church that was destroyed in a recent typhoon.

“I feel God wanted to show me something there. It was not only me that feels this thing ... many people said, ‘Go there, because God is going to show you something.’”

Several evangelical churches in Albania, along with the Kombinat Church of the Nazarene, generously gave the funds to send Bledar (photo next page) as their representative to the Philippines. Bledar spent two months this summer using his construction skills and experience to work alongside Filipino Nazarenes in rebuilding the Salcedo Church of the Nazarene in the Eastern Visayas District. He was the only European worker on site.

Salcedo was completely destroyed by Super Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. The church’s 50th anniversary was coming up this year and they hoped to have a new building in time for the celebration. Rebuilding is being coordinated by Nazarene Disaster Response.

Bledar assisted in establishing the floor, a roof and the walls, as well as laying steel into the foundation. Accustomed to working with machines to do the hard labor of digging and building, Bledar experienced how much more difficult the building work is in the Philippines, where everything is done by hand.

“[Bledar] also taught the local workers other techniques in carpentry which some of them are now using,” wrote Stephen Gualberto, field strategy coordinator for the Philippines. “It was an amazing experience for our local people to work with international volunteers. They realized how big the network of the Church of the Nazarene is around the globe.”

While he was there, the project ran out of funds and the church did not have enough materials and resources to complete the work. So they redirected Bledar’s efforts into their food distribution program with children in the local schools.



Photo courtesy Trocaire, Wikipedia Commons

“We had a van and we cooked the food for them and we shared the food to the children,” Bledar said. “On the second day they were waiting for me in their classes in the school. When they saw me, they were screaming and were saying, ‘The food came, the food came! We are hungry, hurry up.’ My heart was exploding in that moment.”

As the only European in the area, and often without anyone who could speak English as a common language with him, Bledar sometimes felt alone.

“I missed my family and my beloved people,” he said. “I was just walking around, and I [went] to the beach. I stayed there for three hours and I was praying and thinking. And I learned how to find God with nobody helping you.... I was thinking to go back to Albania but God didn’t let me surrender. He said, ‘I am here and I’m more than your family. I’m more than your beloved people. I will help you.’”

Enduring to the end of his planned trip, Bledar was rewarded with what he feels God wanted to show him. He always thought that he couldn’t approach God unless he was happy. But there were times in the Philippines when he was lonely, overwhelmed or sad.

“I started to have a really personal time with God,” he said. “In that place I really understand I should go before God no matter how I’m feeling.”

Upon returning to Albania, Bledar has been sharing about his experience in the Philippines with churches and anyone he meets.

“The one thing we would hope is it see **“ALBANIA”** • page 5

Still rebuilding

Stephen Gualberto, field strategy coordinator for the Philippines Field, provided the following report on rebuilding post-typhoon in the Philippines:

“To date, the Church of the Nazarene through the Nazarene Disaster Response is still involved in reconstruction. We have rebuilt four churches and [are] finishing eight more, a total of 12 completely destroyed church buildings. We have provided shelter kits to more than 1,500 families. We are also building fishing boats. Our commitment is to provide 80 fishing boats and fishing kits to fishermen affected by the disaster.

“We will start in October 2014 the rebuilding of two public classrooms.

“More than 500 least-served children have received school supplies and bags As a follow-through of that help, several local Nazarene volunteers are now teaching Christian values in four elementary schools, impacting more than 1,000 children with Christian values and the gospel of Christ. The program is called VOICE -- Values Education In Classroom Education.

“Another group of volunteers have just started serving in the temporary housing for Internally Displaced People (IDP). They are serving more than 200 families with psychosocial and spiritual activities.

“In all of [these] activities, it is resulting [in] evangelism. People are coming to the Lord. They are also being disciplined and opportunities for church planting in areas where the church is not yet is open.” □

CENTER: Many will start agriculture projects

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Photo courtesy Gina Pottenger

Sergo Slavchov and Daniella Evdokimova, faithful attenders at the Montana Church of the Nazarene in Bulgaria, purchased this acreage and planted fruit trees with a grant they accessed through assistance from the church's compassionate ministry center.

picking berries and fruit when it is in season. That means during the remaining six months they are unemployed and must find odd jobs, such as gathering and selling walnuts.

When the couple heard about New Opportunities, they decided to pursue a new opportunity for themselves.

From 2015 through 2020, the European Union is releasing grants to help people start small enterprises in the areas of agriculture, food production and livestock. But many people, such as Slavchov and Evdokimova, are unaware of these grants, or would not know how to navigate all the legal and bureaucratic

procedures in order to access them. That's why New Opportunities is stepping up to help.

Valentin Kostov and Kameliya Munelska, members of the church who are running the center, helped the couple fill out applications, visit government offices to register as an independent agricultural producer and access start-up capital. With their government grant, Slavchov and Evdokimova have ordered fruit trees – apricots and plums – and purchased three acres of land.

“They say that's not possible for a gypsy,” Slavchov said, referring to his new farm-owning opportunity. “I say,

‘Yes, it's possible,’ and I want us to grow and I want us to have 100 decares (24 acres). I've had these dreams a long time. But I didn't have the opportunity. Now I have the opportunity.”

New Opportunities plans to accept 30 people into the program each year. Ten of those will be age 29 or younger, and the other 20 people will be middle aged or older. The center will offer a class every two weeks, for a total of 24 classes per year, that will inform the participants about the opportunities available to them. They will also learn how to write a business plan, as well as important vocational skills and information necessary to start and run a small business. The consultants will walk the participants through all the steps necessary to start their business.

“Of course it is impossible for us to fix all of the problems that exist in this region, but the people that we can help, it will bring hope to them and it will make a change in their income,” said Kostov. “We are convinced this project will have an impact on our region and on this economically destitute part of the country. We believe it will help people in this area to be successful, not just for themselves but for further generations.”

For many years the Nazarene church in Montana has been involved in a range of ministries to their community, such as visiting elderly people, running a soup kitchen to feed the hungry and more. But according to missionary Jessica Morris, who helped plan and open the center, New Opportunities is intended to present long-term solutions to the economic needs of their community, striking at the source of unemployment, hunger and poverty, rather than simply putting a bandage on its symptoms. □

ALBANIA: Bledar learned lessons during trip

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will help the rest of the Albanian church to get excited about missions and to look beyond the borders of Albania and to understand in the midst of all the suffering and the long history of suffering here in Albania, there are other areas of the world that are also suffering and we can be praying for those areas,” said Steve Beiler, a Nazarene missionary in Albania. “We hope it would bring some more openness and willingness and desire to be praying for the church in the Philippines or the persecuted church in the Middle East or those in Africa.” □



Photo courtesy Asia Pacific Nazarene

“Resist [the devil],
standing firm in
the faith, because
you know that your
brothers throughout
the world are
undergoing the same
kind of sufferings.”
—1 Peter 5:8-9

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New NCM coordinator named

Jörg Eich has been named the Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM) coordinator for the Eurasia Region, effective February 2015; he will also serve as the NCM coordinator for the South Asia Field to succeed Hermann Gschwandtner, who is retiring next year.

Eich previously served as a project coordinator with Helping Hands (NCM Germany), and coordinated major disaster response projects in various countries on the Eurasia Region. He has also served as regional NCM coordinator for the Africa Region.

Eich is a German citizen, and has studied at European Nazarene College. He and his wife have four children. □



Prayer Requests

- Please pray for the ministry of the Montana Church of the Nazarene in Bulgaria, as they boost the local economy and minister holistically to the community through their new compassionate ministry center. Ask God to bless and flourish the ministry and to bring many people to Christ, while improving their lives and families, through the work.
- Please pray for Sabine Wielk as she steps down from leadership of NYI. Please also pray for God's hand on the person who will take over -- for blessing, strength and wisdom.
- Pray for Bledar and the church in Albania, as they grow in their vision and passion for God's mission to the world beyond their nation and culture.

Christ commands us to pray for more workers for the harvest in Luke 10:2: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (NIV). Pray that God would raise up and equip new workers across the region.

Where Worlds Meet is the monthly newsletter for the Eurasia Region of the Church of the Nazarene. To subscribe, e-mail communications@eurasiaregion.org or visit www.eurasiaregion.org.

We welcome stories, photos and prayer requests. E-mail submissions to communications@eurasiaregion.org

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