



where WORLDS meet



the monthly newsletter for the church of the nazarene in eurasia

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TRANSITIONS WELCOMING NEW LEADERS



Sukamal Biswas (left) started as FSC for South Asia in December; Khalil Halaseh (top) stepped into the FSC role for Eastern Mediterranean Field this month. Diego Lopez (bottom) becomes NYI regional coordinator.

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

The Eurasia Region is saying goodbye to three of its field strategy coordinators (FSCs), as well as greeting two new FSCs and a new NYI regional coordinator.

Hermann Gschwandtner, FSC for South Asia, announced his retirement in 2014, and Nathan Biswas, superintendent of two districts in Bangladesh, was named as his successor, to start in the role in December 2014.

Lindell Browning, FSC for the Eastern Mediterranean Field, is currently on a year-long home assignment prior to retiring at the end of the year, and Khalil Halaseh, a pastor in Amman, Jordan, was named as his replacement. The leadership handover took place 1 January 2015.

In December, Kyle Himmelwright, FSC for the Western Mediterranean Field, announced plans to return to the US to take on pastoral ministry in February. The search will begin soon for his replacement.

Sabine Wielk, NYI coordinator for the region, also retired this year from her role (see article in WWM November 2014). Diego Lopez, copastor at Longsight Church of the Nazarene, in Manchester, UK, has been named as her successor.

In this issue, we will meet Biswas, Halaseh and Lopez and hear their stories. In the February edition of Where Worlds Meet, we will say goodbye to Gschwandtner, Browning and Himmelwright. □

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CALL TO FASTING AND PRAYER 14 JAN -- 3 FEB

Eurasia Region Communications

The Eurasia Region is calling all Nazarenes in the region to unite in a focused prayer and fasting time, 14 January to 3 February 2015. It is suggested that participants consider following the Daniel Fast, which is referenced in the first chapter of the Old Testament book of Daniel, in which the prophet ate only vegetables and drank only water for 21 days while praying. Various other fasts are also appropriate for this emphasis.

The purpose is to draw the Church closer to God while starting off a new year. The region is providing daily devotions, a calendar and promotional templates on the new Daniel Fast Facebook group, as well as details on different ways of fasting.

Visit the closed, secure group by searching Facebook with: "Daniel Fast (Eurasia Region)." Then ask to be added by an administrator.

Throughout the 21-day fasting and prayer emphasis, post prayer requests and answers to prayer in the Facebook group. □

YOUR STORY
OUR STORY
GOD'S STORY

‘Learning never ends’

Nepal pastor benefits from SANBC

By
Nepal
Communications



“If one wants to make his leadership more effective, she or he needs training,” says Rev. Ram, 66 years old, a pastor in Nepal. Ram, serving as a remote village pastor, had migrated a decade ago from a mountainous district to the plains land of *terai* (Southern plain belt of Nepal) where the life is considered easier than other parts of the country.

Ram Bahadur had not received any biblical trainings when he was appointed as a pastor. He enrolled in South Asia Nazarene Bible College (SANBC) three years ago to learn more about biblical teachings so that he could teach well in the church. Excited on his graduation day, Ram said, “Learning together with other pastors and colleagues is very interesting and helpful to grow together in Christ.”

He was the only person to preach in the church three years ago, but now there are several preachers and it is because of the classes in which he learned to develop leadership. Pastor Ram has also improved in preparing sermons. Others have also learned from him to prepare sermons in the church.

Ram was a primary school teacher for more than 15 years. Now he is retired, but he is always eager to learn things. Many times it was difficult to continue the SANBC classes, especially in the

summer season when he had to plant crops without being delayed. The learning center is three hours on bus from his residence but he did not miss any classes. The reason simply, he explains, is the thirst of learning.

Along with the SANBC classes, he began to experience the presence of God with him. He came to know that he had to change many things in him.

“People expect many things in us (pastors); we need to be faithful in our walk with Christ, it is the best solution for people’s expectation in us.”

Ram has a family of seven members. He wants to continue his education if he gets the opportunity. He said, “Learning never ends because we are not perfect and we do not know everything.” □



Halaseh takes on E. Med. Field leadership

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

Editor's note: Khalil Halaseh is stepping into the role of field strategy coordinator (FSC) for the Eastern Mediterranean Field, taking over for Lindell Browning who has served as FSC for 22 years, and serving in the field as a ministry leader for more than 35 years. A field strategy coordinator provides leadership, strategic vision and direction to the districts and local churches that are located within a field. The Eurasia Region has seven fields.

Halaseh shared his testimony and ministry experience with Where Worlds Meet. We will look back over Lindell and Kay Browning's years of service in an upcoming issue of Where Worlds Meet, as they move toward retirement.

In 1988, Khalil Halaseh was a troubled 16-year-old in Amman, Jordan. He'd grown up in a family that practiced no faith and had little interest in the Bible or church. He was involved in street fights, and developed a negative reputation. He was expelled from school, and people began to reject him because of his behavior. He was jailed three different times.

Sitting in the jail the third time, he prayed to God, "Lord, I don't know you, but if you take me out of here, I promise to give you my life." He also promised that if someone beat him again, he would turn the other cheek.

Two weeks later, his uncle, very concerned about his nephew, bailed him out of the jail and had a serious talk with him. Although his uncle was not religious, he mentioned to Halaseh a youth party he'd heard about at the Al Ashrafiyeh Nazarene Church. Halaseh decided to go, but arrived only at the end of the event.

A young man from the church approached Halaseh and began talking with him, even inviting him to a church picnic. Others also reached out to the visitor.

"I felt, 'Wow, it's a good environment. I like it.'"

Halaseh brought two friends with

him to the picnic. Despite the three teenagers' reputations, everyone accepted them and welcomed them with open arms. A woman sat and talked with him for two hours and said the church would love to have him be a part. Deeply impressed by the showers of kindness, he approached the pastor.

"I said, 'I saw the people at the picnic and I need to be like them.' He said, 'You have to repent if you want to be Christian.' I prayed with him and I felt I am happy; there is something starting in my life I can't explain."

Halaseh began to experience a deep thirst for the Bible. Instead of his previous habit of going out all evening on the street or to the theater, he began staying in his room to read. The sudden change in his behavior worried his parents, who called a therapist to examine him. The therapist assured his parents that he was fine, and so they allowed him to continue reading and attending church.

After about two months, Halaseh began to share Jesus with his parents. First his mother came to Christ, then his brother, next his sister, and finally his father. More family members followed.

Passionate about sharing Jesus with others, Halaseh made a sign that said "Nazarene church" and put it on the door of his home and began inviting neighbors and friends for Bible study and prayer meetings, during which time he shared his testimony with people.

The pastor, observing all this, told Halaseh he was exhibiting the natural gifts of an evangelist, and he provided space in the church for Halaseh to begin developing leadership skills and gaining experience.

In 1991, Halaseh studied with Eastern Mediterranean Nazarene Bible College, where his eyes were opened to all he still needed to learn and ways that his life still needed to be transformed in Christ. During a chapel service that told the story of God calling Abraham out of his homeland to travel to a new promised land, Halaseh recognized God's call to ministry on his life, and he embraced it.

His pastor and family supported



his move to a theological school in Lebanon run by the Anderson Church of God denomination where he graduated in 1995. He returned to Amman to serve as a youth pastor at the Al Ashrafiyeh Nazarene Church. When his pastor was called to another church, he decided that Halaseh should take over as the lead pastor. From 1996 to the present, the church grew from about 50 people to between 400 and 500 people. The congregation has an active ministry to about 600 refugee families.

Over the years, Halaseh became involved with the John Maxwell Equip ministry; he serves as a facilitator and an associate trainer in four countries, and also as the pastor for a sports ministry in the Middle East. He has led Evangelism Explosion for 20 countries in the Arab world. And he is a volunteer with Willow Creek, on the organization's advisory board. For several years, he helped to organize a Nazarene Pentecost service in Jordan that attracted up to 3,000 believers for prayer.

Halaseh is stepping down from Equip and Evangelism Explosion, in order to focus more fully on his new FSC role.

He has become passionate about not only evangelism, but also training leaders and pastors.

"His skill in leadership development is one thing that will really unite [the field]," said Lindell Browning, who is retiring from

Biswas to take leadership for South Asia

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

Editor's note: As Hermann Gschwandtner retires from decades of ministry in the Church of the Nazarene, stepping out of his most recent role of field strategy coordinator for the South Asia Field, he turns over leadership to Sukamal Biswas, with whom he has worked closely in developing the church in Bangladesh for the past 20 years. This article looks at Sukamal's testimony and his leadership in the church, as well as his thoughts looking forward to this new role of leadership in the field. We will share about Gschwandtner's ministry in an upcoming edition of Where Worlds Meet.

As a 15-year-old boy, Sukamal Biswas left home with just \$1 in his pocket, because his family was unable to continue providing for his education. It took two days for him to travel to the capital city of Bangladesh, Dhaka, from his tiny village where he had grown up learning from his parents the skills of farming.

His parents were strong Christians but Biswas had not yet accepted Christ.

In Dhaka, where he spent several days roaming the streets, he met an American Baptist missionary who allowed him to sleep in the church.

"That night, I started reading my Bible. In Isaiah 53, I saw 'We all, like sheep, have gone astray,'" he recalled. "I'm alone and I'm crying. I am a 15-year-old boy caring for myself. That night I surrendered to Jesus to save me, and give me right direction. That's the turning point of my life."

After accepting Christ, one day Biswas saw a local Christian pastor. The pastor was wearing a nice shirt and nice pants from a famous brand, and a good pair of shoes. Biswas had never had nice clothes; his family was too poor. He had never seen branded clothing. Biswas thought that if he became a pastor, he would also be able to wear nice clothes. So he told the missionary that he wanted to be a pastor. The missionary said he would need to graduate college and then go to seminary before he could be a pastor.

Determined, Biswas finished college and then went on to seminary. He was appointed by a Christian mission to be a traveling evangelist, planting churches in different villages. He found he was gifted in the work, and although the job did not provide a high income or security, he developed a passion for sharing Jesus with the people.

"I found that a lot of people like me really need to see the hope for life, hope for their salvation, somebody needs to tell them and I really feel the strong feeling that I'm the person to tell the people the love of Christ and the good news of the gospel," he said. "Then I responded, 'Here I am, God send me.'"

It was no longer about nice clothes but a divine calling to give people hope in Jesus Christ.

Eventually, through prayer and seeking God's lead, he felt a particular call to social work, and applied to various nongovernment organizations

for work. He married a nurse, Rina, who supported his calling. After many years of unemployment, he finally got a job cleaning classrooms for a nonprofit's school. Seeing the needs of the impoverished children, he remembered his own childhood, and he developed a vision

to help poor children. Over time, he was promoted repeatedly until he was in a top management position.

Then, in the early 1990s, two Nazarene leaders visited Bangladesh at the invitation of a local Christian who wanted to see the denomination enter the country. Biswas was at that meeting and had numerous questions about the denomination's beliefs and practices. He was accompanied by fellow worker Vanu. They agreed to file the paperwork to register the church with the government.

The regional leaders decided to open work in Bangladesh through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries (NCM) and led by local leaders instead of foreign missionaries. The strategy depended heavily on Biswas and Vanu to carry out the work. Biswas, who came to appreciate Nazarene doctrines and beliefs, decided to join the church. He



Sukamal Biswas moves from compassionate ministries and district leadership to FSC for South Asia.

developed a strategy to plant churches through compassionate ministries -- particularly to children -- and JESUS Film, with the intention to start the work in Bangladesh without a single penny of foreign funds. He wanted the churches to start out with a sense of self-dependence rather than dependency on donations from overseas.

Hermann Gschwandtner, then leader of NCM in South Asia, says that Biswas's strategy to make the new church self-sustaining from the beginning had never been tried in the history of the denomination. But it worked.

Today there are more than 3,000 total congregations in Bangladesh and more than 700 licensed pastors. Biswas served as the district superintendent (DS) of Bangladesh before it split into three districts in 2010; then he continued to help provide leadership for the districts and leading Bangladesh Nazarene Mission, a compassionate ministry.

As Gschwandtner retires from his role as field strategy coordinator for the South Asia Field, of which Bangladesh is a part, Biswas is stepping into the role.

"The secret about growth is to involve others into my thinking," Biswas says. "When I see the dream, my role is as a dreamer to insert my dream to my inner circle and outer circle, then my dream becomes their dream."

"In my present role as field strategy coordinator, I would like to respect my other leaders -- the district superintendents, the leaders in the other

"My role will be the facilitator ... help the leaders to carry the gospel into areas and places where it has not been brought so far."

-- Sukamal Biswas



Save The Date

Who: All Nazarenes in the Eurasia Region

What: You are invited to attend the Eurasia Regional Conference.

When: 31 October - 4 November 2015

Where: Different facilities, but fly to the same airport as last time.

Why: Join with others from across the Eurasia Region for a time of spiritual renewal and fellowship.

Mark your calendars! More information to follow.

BISWAS: REALLY CARES FOR PEOPLE

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countries (of the South Asia Field). I am not a person to do by myself everything. My role will be the facilitator, facilitating the church growth and church planting and evangelism; to empower the indigenous leader. And at the same time, help the leaders to carry the gospel into areas and places where it has not been brought so far."

Hermann has worked closely with Biswas over the past 20 years.

"He has an incredible skill of finding and implementing systems that work," Hermann said. "He is definitely a person who is ready to challenge the borders or the limits doing extraordinary things. He's a person that really knows in his society how to work with the people. And of course an extremely dedicated person. He is a person who really has a compassionate heart. He really cares for people." □

HALASEH: Harvest is ready

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serving as the field strategy coordinator for the Eastern Mediterranean Field over 22 years. "He is very intentional in building a team ... hopefully he'll be able to reach out to the whole team on the field. He's able to travel to some areas I couldn't travel to. He's got a wonderful passion for the Lord. He's very passionate about evangelism, no matter who the people are."

Halaseh accepts leadership during a challenging time for the Middle East. But he believes that God has given the Church in the Middle East a mighty task and great opportunity in the midst of ongoing civil war, political turmoil, persecution and subsequent mass displacement of people.

"I believe the Church is found for such a time as this."

-- Khalil Halaseh

"I can see what is happening now in the Middle East as an opportunity for the Church to rise up and shine Jesus," he says. "There are many who are fallen in the hands of the robbers and we are like

the Samaritan whom God has send to help. I believe that the Church is found for such a time as this. There is no better time for the Christian to show love for those who do not love them, and to live like

Jesus, because many in the Middle East are trying to find solutions away from what they used to believe. Jesus said, open your eyes the harvest is ready; we just need to ask the Lord to send workers for the harvest." □

Diego Lopez steps up as NYI leader

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

Editor's note: Diego Lopez, of Manchester, UK, was this month named to fill the open position of leader for the Eurasia Region's Nazarene Youth International (NYI). In this role, Lopez will lead the regional NYI council, develop young leaders and provide strategic vision for building and expanding NYI across the diverse cultures and contexts of the Eurasia Region. He shared his testimony and experience with Where Worlds Meet, as well as his vision for the future of NYI.

Diego Lopez was a teenager in Colombia when he began to experience bullying. To defend himself effectively, he began to study and practice Tae Kwon Do, a self-defense martial art. The discipline increased his self-confidence, which repelled the bullies. He earned a black belt and participated in competitions.

Around that time, some of the teens he had hung around with began going to a local church and accepting Christ. Lopez was so intrigued with the dramatic change that took place in them, he wanted to see the church for himself. So he began attending. The people accepted him just as he was, and soon he accepted Christ for himself.

He quickly joined in the church's street evangelism activities, which he enjoyed and found himself naturally effective in leading people to Christ.

While still a teen, he moved to Barcelona, Spain, and joined the Nazarene church there. He tried to continue what he knew about evangelism, but in the Spanish, European cultural context, it didn't work. He realized the people were skeptical of what he had to say about Christ and the gospel. He began to feel a need for theological education.

Lopez attended a Nazarene Youth Congress in Guadalajara in 2003, where he met many Nazarene youth from different cultures, including someone whom had come from England. She suggested that he move to Manchester to learn English, so he would be qualified to study at European Nazarene College (EuNC), which requires a proficiency in English of all its students.

He did just that, learning English in Manchester while getting involved in Longsight Community Church of



Diego Lopez becomes the NYI regional coordinator, following Sabine Wielk who held the role for 13 years. Lopez brings a passion for youth ministry and experience in urban youth outreach, social work and local church pastoring to the job.

the Nazarene, which embraced him, providing him unconditional support. When he was proficient in English, he relocated to Büsingen, Germany, to study for a two-year Christian Ministry Certificate from EuNC.

After graduation, he felt called back to Longsight, so he returned to Manchester and joined the church's leadership team as an intern while pursuing

and graduating with a bachelor's degree from Nazarene Theological College in Theology: Youth Work and Ministry. After graduation, he took a part-time co-pastoring job at Longsight. His other job for the next five years was as a staff member of M13, a parachurch youth ministry which deploys youth pastors to the streets of the urban center to work with youth who have complex issues. He has also worked with local councils in social services to teens who come from domestic abuse or other troubled situations.

Lopez is passionate about ministering among youth.

"I think it's a very important time in young people's life; 13 to 19 is a time when you form your political views, your religious views; it's a key time of transformation," he says. "Understanding

it from within is very important."

As the new Eurasia Region NYI leader, Lopez has a vision for the regional council to provide leadership and strategic direction for the field and district and local NYI leaders, as well as to listen to ideas and strategies from the local church.

"I think whatever we do [regionally] in leadership needs to reflect all the

"Whatever we do in leadership needs to reflect all the way down to the local church. The most effective way is to create a line of communication."

-- Diego Lopez

way to the local church," he says. "The most effective way is to create an effective line of communication from field representatives to NYI presidents to local leaders to anyone who just walks into a local church. NYI everywhere [should have] the same theology and ethos. It

will look different in every country and context, but it should reflect the same passions and Wesleyan theology. I think effective communication throughout the systems is very important and we can do so by engaging with new technology and social media."

Diego is married to Palmira, an accounting assistant; he will continue part-time with Longsight and with M13.

□

*“O Israel, put
your hope in the
LORD, for with
the LORD is
unfailing love and
with him is full
redemption.”
—Psalm 130:7*

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Do you have pictures of your church ministry here in Eurasia that you would like to share with the region? Send them to communications@eurasiaregion.org and we'll consider posting them on our Facebook page.

Prayer Requests

- Please pray for Diego Lopez, as he begins to lead Nazarene youth across Eurasia, along with the regional youth council; pray also for Sukamal Biswas as he steps into the role of field strategy coordinator for the South Asia Field; and pray for Khalil Halaseh who is filling the role of field strategy coordinator for the Eastern Mediterranean Field. Ask God to give these men wisdom, clear guidance, empowerment of the Holy Spirit and a servant's heart. Ask also for His protection over them and their families.
- Please pray those retiring from ministry after many years of faithful service: Lindell Browning, stepping down from leadership of the Eastern Mediterranean Field; Hermann Gschwandtner, stepping down from leading the South Asia Field as well as NCM on the region; and Sabine Wielk who is retiring from many years as NYI regional coordinator. Ask God to bless them in these new chapters of their lives.
- 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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