



where WORLDS meet



the monthly newsletter for the church of the nazarene in eurasia

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PLANTING IN NEW SOIL

Dutch church expands to unreached area



Photos courtesy Gina Pottenger

Hilde Verbueken (left) is a Sunday school teacher at Kruispunt Reeland Kerk van de Nazarener, a recently planted congregation from the Dordrecht Church of the Nazarene. She and several others joined the team to start the new work two years ago in an unreached neighborhood. Natascha Kleton van Gils (right) became a believer through the group's Alpha Course.

By Gina Grate Pottenger
Eurasia Region Communications

Dordrecht, the Netherlands – *Ilse was reluctant to visit the new Nazarene church near her home, even though her social worker thought it would be good for her. The 70-year-old Dutch woman had recently divorced from her husband of 39 years, and her son's family lives in England. Now she resides alone.

Ilse has suffered with depression and poor self-esteem throughout her life. She has attempted suicide many times -- beneath the sleeve of her sweater remain the thin, white scar lines.

It's not that she had never tried church. But she has bad memories of the church she attended as a youth, which she describes as legalistic and judgmental, amplifying her lack of self-worth.

The social worker persisted, until

Ilse allowed him to take her one Sunday about a year ago. At first she visited once a month. Then twice a month. Now, every Sunday.

"During the week, I feel terrible, but when I come on Sunday, all the bad feelings go out. Here, it's very warm. I feel like here..." and then she demonstrated a hug.

Ilse says the people at the Nazarene church love her and welcome her, and she's been learning about God's love, too.

"I need Him, I need Him," she says with a smile, and points upward.

Kruispunt Reeland Kerk van de Nazarener (Crossroads Reeland Church of the Nazarene) was planted two years ago, a missional outreach of its mother church, Kerk van de Nazarener

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Dordrecht, which first formed in the 1980s and now numbers about 600 people, including about 150 children.

The Church of the Nazarene denomination has about a dozen churches in the Netherlands. Over several decades, many Dutch Christians have become dissatisfied with other denominations and begun attending Nazarene churches, feeding much of the denomination's growth in the Netherlands.

Within that context, about four years ago the Dordrecht church began dreaming of developing a missional outreach to reach completely unchurched people. Dordrecht's population is 130,000, but some of its neighborhoods have no church presence.

Pastor Michel Meeuws noticed that one of his lay leaders, a neighborhood chief of police named Bas Breckveldt, has the qualities to be a missional church planter. Breckveldt agreed to lead a pioneer effort in addition to his full-time night shift work, and eventually eight people from the congregation, including his wife, Inge, joined him.

The church prayed and fasted for three Saturdays, seeking God's leading, particularly about where to start the new work, Meeuws said.

"There are a lot of churches, but we started looking for a neighborhood where there is need," Breckveldt said. "The

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PLANT: Started with community service

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Kruispunt is meeting in a school, where they have prayer, coffee, a short service and then a meal together.

people in need are the ones who are open to all kinds of questions.”

The group researched different areas where they could work, and through a process of elimination narrowed the possibilities to Reeland, an economically struggling neighborhood with no other church presence. Then they formed a two-part strategy to launch the work: 1. Voluntarily doing community improvement work and helping people with practical needs; 2. starting a loosely traditional Sunday worship service where people they meet could come together for social interaction and to learn about God.

They went into the community to pick up trash and organized a barbecue so they could start meeting people. They also joined with existing organizations to support their community work.

The Kruispunt church, which now numbers between 30 to 40 adults, meets on Sundays in a school.

The core of the Sunday gathering is a meal, usually soup and bread with some sides.

“Because Jesus eats with everyone, He invited Himself to all kinds of people and they eat.... It binds together. So that’s where we started. We want to eat,” Breckveldt said.

The group at first wanted to make their gathering very different from a traditional church service so the unchurched would feel comfortable. Yet, when it came time to design the gathering, it was hard to imagine something different.

“These are people who have been Christians all their lives, so 30, 40, 50 years; they don’t know anything else but being a church like we know here

in Holland – mostly the Reformed church. So you have a clear liturgy that this is what we do, you just sit and listen, you sing your song, you listen to a sermon and you go home.”

Eventually, the team found a format that worked.

The Sunday worship services are casual, with a 10 a.m. prayer time, a 10:30 coffee and cake

fellowship as people begin to enter the building, and then a short 11 a.m. worship service, with a few songs, and a brief, simple sermon. At the conclusion, the team offers creative opportunities for active response to the sermon. For instance, one Sunday the group was invited to nail to a wooden cross pieces of paper on which they had written their burdens.

Kruispunt also offers the Alpha



Love and coffee

A homeless man wandered in on a Sunday during the coffee fellowship. The church members welcomed him for coffee and cake. He joined the conversations, but left as soon as the service began. After it finished, he re-entered to eat with the congregation.

“They had a conversation with him and just talked to him and asked about him: ‘Who are you?’ ‘Where have you been?’ ‘What’s your life story?’ And the next week he walked in again, he had coffee, he went out during service, had a few beers and came back. It’s been three months now, he’s been there every week.”

One week, someone offered him a Bible. He turned down the offer, but two weeks later he asked for a copy.

The Salvation Army found him a small flat, but it was unfurnished. So the church rallied to donate a bed, a kitchen table, and to stock his food pantry. Some of the church members were there to welcome him when he entered his new home for the first time.

The Salvation Army worker who spends time with the man told Breckveldt that as a result of the church’s ministry to him, he’s started asking questions about why Christians are kind and helpful to someone like him. □

Nazarene is youngest elected general secretary of Albania's Evangelical Alliance

by Teanna Sunberg
Central Europe Field Communications



Photo courtesy/teanna sunberg

At the age of 27, Ergest Biti is the youngest pastor in Albania's Evangelical community. In January 2016, he was elected to the role of General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance for the Albanian Church by his significantly older colleagues.

This election brings to fulfillment a dream given to an elderly lady in the church where Biti became a believer years ago. She told the Christ-follower that one day he would be the pastor of the Albanian church. As General Secretary, Pastor Biti now holds the responsibility of guiding the Alliance's 140+ registered churches in a country

"When we have something that touches us together, it brings us together."
-- Pastor Ergest Biti

whose majority population has a different faith system. Biti is also the pastor of the Nazarene church in Tirana and he serves as NYI president for Central Europe.

As Biti looks back at that elderly woman's statement, he is amazed at how "pastor of the Albanian church" now relates to his three different roles.

A 2012 official consensus cited just 3,000 evangelical Christians out of the country's population of 2.7 million. Biti

suggests that the evangelical numbers are significantly higher, estimating 7,000 to 10,000 believers. Yet, Biti says that most Albanians do not understand what the term "evangelical Christian" means.

"When you say 'church,' people immediately think Orthodox or Catholic."

This connection is heavily influenced by the Catholic community's ethnically Albanian Mother Theresa, born in the neighboring Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. With the addition of Catholicism and Orthodoxy, around 40 percent of Albania's population is Christian, making it a minority religion.

Biti's new role is significant, charging him with the task of representing the evangelical community to the government, and speaking influentially into laws that affect religious equality, the representation of religion in textbooks, as well as bringing unity among evangelical churches.

"Getting Christians to work together can be hard," says Biti in reference to the question of unity. The challenge is that Albania is a geographically large area with relatively few evangelical churches for the size. Bringing people together is both an economical and a geographical challenge. To this end, geographically linked local churches regularly gather in regional alliances and the Albanian Evangelical Alliance, of which Biti now presides, meets twice per year.

While gathering for official meetings is important, Biti believes that the key to unity comes through personal visitation to local communities. Since his election, he has begun traveling to individual churches in an effort to encourage pastors in ministry and to be a bridge between local congregations. He gives an example of a local body of believers in the south of Albania who are partnering with an orphanage.

"A few years ago, the orphanage held 30 children ranging in age from 2 weeks old to teenagers. The church people began to proactively seek adoptive families. There are only 12 children left in the orphanage now."

Biti uses this church as an example

of how a local community of faith is doing something beautiful, but that the initiative could be made stronger by working together with other Christian congregations.

In March, Biti met with the Macedonian Evangelical community to discuss how the Albanian church can be ready for a possible influx of Middle Eastern refugees. Addressing his Macedonian Evangelical Alliance colleagues, "When we have something that touches us together, it brings us together. We [the evangelical community] will be the people to serve and to speak [about the needs of refugees]," Biti said.

Biti is finishing the Nazarene Course of Study for ordination and is married to Eda Xhakollari, who is an ordained deacon on the Albania-Kosova district.



They have two young daughters.

When asked about the many responsibilities that he carries at such a young age, Biti said, "We might not think it is God's time, but it can be God's time for a person to lead. God has been preparing me from a young age and I will trust him to help me." □

Read how Biti's church sports ministry is reaching neighborhood boys:
<http://www.eurasiaregion.org/where-worlds-meet-february-2016/>

Nepali NMI team delivers baby on bus

A woman was traveling alone on a public bus from Damak to Itahari of Eastern Nepal. Bus passengers were lost in their own thoughts, and the bus staff were doing their duties as usual. Suddenly a noise of crying burst out amid the travelers. Maiya*, 28, who was pregnant, was frightened by sudden pain in her stomach.

People from Nazarene Missions International (NMI) were traveling to Itahari in the same bus. They approached Maiya and asked her what date she had been given by the doctor for expecting her baby. Maiya said she was to expect her baby within a few days.

In Nepal, NMI raises awareness on

pregnancy, breast feeding and other health issues among women in monthly meetings. They also arrange special meetings and workshops on days of national festivals. Both Christian and non-Christian women are invited. Health workers of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries-Nepal (NCM) share their knowledge on pregnancy and health related matters.

Because of this training and practice, the NMI members on the bus had two health workers in the team. They suggested the bus staff stop the bus and take Maiya to a hospital nearby. But instead, the driver decided to speed up the bus. Maiya's pain and distress was growing.

The NMI team started to take care of Maiya, using their own clothes and scarf. Finally Maiya gave birth to a baby inside the bus.

As the bus was in its destination in Itahari, the NMI team called Maiya's family members and handed over both mother and child to them.

Maiya was very happy that she had help from these unfamiliar women during her crisis. She felt Christ's love as she knew it through these loving people.

□

**Name changed for privacy. Story taken from Nepal NMI annual report.*

EuNC opens new administrative center



On Tuesday, 2 February 2016, the main collection of the European Nazarene College (EuNC) library, together with office equipment, legal, administrative and financial records, and the archives were moved to the new EuNC Administrative Centre, which, at 93 square metres (1,000 square feet), includes two offices and library space on the first floor of an office building in Linsengericht, near Frankfurt.

Rector Klaus Arnold, Administrative Assistant and Office Manager Martina Arnold, and Financial Assistant Tanja Baum have offices there.

Visit the college's website for more information about their programs: www.eunc.edu.



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Download materials now for Easter offerings

CHURCH OF  THE NAZARENE



“The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.”

Romans 10:12b

<http://www.eurasiaregion.org/nmi/promotion-information/world-evangelism-fund-promotion/>



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*"The LORD is my
light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear? the
LORD is the strength
of my life; of whom
shall I be afraid?"*
— Psalms 27:1

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Send us your story ideas, too!

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DUTCH: Second plant in works

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Course several times a year. Alpha is a 10-week introduction to faith through discussion and study. In the first series, about 16 people participated; the second series, there were 12. A new Alpha Course is planned for this fall.

A year ago, Natascha Kleton van Gils' neighbor invited her to visit the church. When she heard about the Alpha Course, Kleton van Gils decided it would be a good way to learn more. After six weeks she said, "I think I'm going to just start to believe." She accepted Jesus as her Savior. The panic attacks she had suffered from gradually ceased. Kleton van Gils is a regular attendee, and is going to start helping with children's Sunday school. Now her husband and son are coming as well.

"They are further than we expected them to be," Meeuws says of Kruispunt's development. "They are getting non-Christian, postmodern people. They are not getting church people, and sometimes they have 70 or 80 people."

Meeuws, who is studying for a master's degree in missiology, said it is projected in 10 years more than 1,000 established Dutch churches will

disappear, and will be replaced by a movement of small, unconventional churches in unreached neighborhoods. The Nazarenes in Dordrecht want to be on the cutting edge of that social shift.

Encouraged by Kruispunt's growth, the Dordrecht church is planning a second church plant. They've chosen the neighborhood and are talking to a potential pastor to lead the effort. They may try a different method to get the new plant going, as Kruispunt took a lot of time, energy and money to get started, Meeuws said.

Although the neighborhood demographic will be different and the approach may be different, the message will be the same: No matter who you are, you are welcome.

"People [will come] who will never want to or have never had the experience to be seen and be welcomed the way they are. That's why we really try to proclaim, 'You are welcomed just the way you are,'" Breckveldt said. "After that we will see who you are and that's OK. God loves you."

**Name changed for privacy. □*

Prayer Requests

- Please pray for the Nazarene churches in Dordrecht as they reach out to communities where many people don't yet know Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead more people to these congregations and to bless their fellowship. Also ask God's guidance on the plans for a potential third church.
- Please pray for Pastor Ergest Biti as he fills many different leadership roles for Albania and Central Europe. Ask God to guide and direct his steps, protect him, and bless his ministry and influence. Pray also for God's blessing on Christians and churches across Albania -- to be the light of love in their nation.
- Pray for European Nazarene College leaders, learning center facilitators and lecturers, that they would continue to expand quality theological education across Europe.

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.

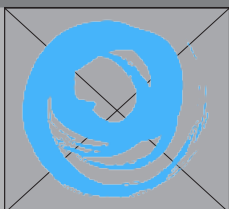
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