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EURASIA

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## Daring to Dream

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Muna's parents were told their baby would never walk. Today she is ministering to refugees in Jordan.

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# Surprised and puzzled



**T**ravelling to all the areas in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia where there are Nazarene churches and mission work is an essential part of my role as regional director. However, after crossing thousands of miles, my wife and I always return to the Eurasia Regional Office in Büsingen, Germany.

Büsingen is a small farming village set in an idyllic environment along the river Rhine. We have almost 15 people working here, most of whom are missionaries. It is the support centre of missionary work in one of the most culturally and religiously diverse and conflict-prone of our global denomination's six regions.

The office staff itself is very diverse: German, American, Dutch, Scottish, French, and Swiss. But almost every one of these cross-cultural workers have been working in multiple other cultures. For example, one person speaks multiple languages, including Arabic, and she and her partner have a lot of experience in Central Africa.

These diverse experiences and cultural background provides important open doors. The Arabic ability has opened up new opportunities to connect with a small group of Syrian refugees who have found residence in the village.

Bringing a multi-cultural team together for the sake of missionary work and strengthening the local church also leads to challenges in the work.

Just picture someone who comes from the French culture: meals are social events, times to fellowship and

connect. You talk and talk and catch up on family and friendships, and everyone makes time for this. They might say, "We can start with breakfast, prolong it to make it a brunch, and decide to also have lunch together." They might not leave the table for hours.

Now imagine someone from, say, the American culture, where time is measured differently. I once sat down in an American restaurant which marketed itself by providing clocks on each table: if the meals were not brought to the table within so many minutes, they were free!

Such a different understanding of time expresses itself in many ways requiring sanctified cultural adjustments. It shows in how punctual people are in coming to meetings, the way telephone conversations are handled, sensitivity to relational needs, etc. This also causes us to make cultural judgements: She is late, so she doesn't care; he is rushed, he must have other priorities. Imagine what this does to conversations, performance evaluations, teamwork, etc.

Christ's Spirit will have to do a lot of work to bring each one of us to do what Scripture says: "bearing with one another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you" (Col. 3). In learning to live and work together, we are no longer Greek, Jew, Scythian, "but Christ is all, and in all" (Col.3:11).

Christ becomes manifest when we sense Him in (and among) us being joyful and grateful for both the punctuality and task orientation of one culture, and the relational richness in time of another culture. Here the Kingdom breaks in on us, whether in Büsingen at the Regional Office or in a local church anywhere in Eurasia Region.

-- Arthur Snijders, Eurasia Regional Director

P.S. For those of you who are interested in working with various cultures, you will enjoy Erin Meyer's book, *The Culture Map*.



Photos courtesy Rebecca Moaisio



Photo courtesy Michelle Sowerby

## Pioneering **Daring to Dream**

*Nazarenes in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland gathered to seek God's dream for pioneering to their communities.*

**By Gina Grate Pottenger**

“Breaking down the walls – like Jericho.”

As one participant summed it up, removing barriers was a recurring theme of Dare 2 Dream, the second conference of its kind for the Nazarene church in the United Kingdom, held in Paisley, Scotland, 17-19 March.

Except the metaphor took on an unusual meaning in this context: tearing down the church walls that often separate believers from their surrounding community.

With speakers ranging from local Nazarene pastors to leaders of

evangelical non-profits, and including keynote speaker theologian Alan Hirsch, all seemed to echo the same urgent call to Nazarenes across England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland: Get outside of the church building and serve your community.

For the first time in decades, the British Isles North and the British Isles South districts came together during their district assemblies, which were held across the street from one another and lasted only a few hours on Friday morning. The rest of the weekend was given over to the conference, and concluded with ordinations. More than 200 people attended.

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# DREAM: Stories described taking church outside the building

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"There is no doubt that the church is at a crossroads in Northern Europe," said Arthur Snijders, director for the Eurasia Region, of which the two districts are a part. "The decision to limit business time in order to have time to reimagine the mission of the church in British society was a healthy example of letting go in order to get a hold of something new."

Dare 2 Dream was about just that: a call for churches to once again dream big dreams, to embrace a missional, pioneering spirit regarding their own local communities. The conference challenged individuals and local churches alike to imagine creative, fresh ways for sharing God's love with the people in their spheres of influence.

**"Go to them instead of sitting in the building and expecting them to come to you."**

**-- Nicole Alker, Leeds**

"It seemed to be more a call to see the direction of travel and to walk with it," said David Montgomery, district superintendent for the British Isles South. "The world has changed, and the church needs to change in order for its message to be received. This applies to both districts. We need to be in our communities and engaged with people."

For many, the message came through loud and clear.

Marcia Shields is a family lawyer who primarily works with families in which the children have been removed or threatened to be removed due to allegations of harm, neglect or substance abuse. The conference title, "Dare 2 Dream"

drew her to attend.

"I've had a dream for a while which I have put on the backburner and really did not pursue that dream," she said. "My dream was something God had given me from Jeremiah 33:6-9, a beautiful promise of restoration for families, and peace and security for them, and for the glory to go to God. That had been my dream."

However, because of busyness and distractions, Shields had put her dream aside.

"The first video I saw this morning encouraged me [that] we can trust God, and He's given us a reason to trust Him to fulfill the dreams He's given us, and that encouraged me. I am daring to pursue that and step out of the security and safety I'm in at the moment. I'm trusting God."

That message of tearing down walls that sometimes separate churches from their communities seemed to reaffirm what leadership is already discussing at Leeds South Church of the Nazarene, said Nicole Alker. Leeds has a café in the church building, but Alker says they've begun talking about taking the café outside the church to some other location in the community.

"There's a general vibe about getting out there to the community and becoming Christ to people," Alker said. "Go to them instead of sitting in the building and expecting them to come to you. It's already along the lines of what we're trying to do."

"It was really encouraging for me to have many from my congregation gathered together to hear teaching on missional thinking," said Pastor Carl McCann, of the Ashton Church of the Nazarene. "We are having a feedback session for our church delegates towards the end of April and will be working out what will happen as a result of the conference within the Ashton church."

Alan Hirsch's teaching on how to

conduct discipleship has made McCann rethink the way it is done in Ashton.

"I was really struck by the idea of 'behaving ourselves into a better way of thinking, rather than thinking ourselves into a better way of behaving.' Gave me a lot of food for thought about how house groups should be run," McCann said. □

## Bowling for Jesus

A number of Nazarene leaders at Dare 2 Dream shared stories of how God had moved them into new relationships and ministries when they became open to seeing where God was already at work.

Ruth Turner, pastor of Millbrook Church of the Nazarene, Northern Ireland, shared that initially her church plant met in a theater in Larne, and the small congregation was proud that their location seemed forward-thinking. But then God drew their attention to a neighborhood of 300 homes in Millbrook where there was no church, and they realized God wanted them to relocate there.

After moving the church, Turner was walking through the neighborhood and met a disabled man. She invited him to church, but he objected, pointing out that churches always want people to come to them.

"Why don't you ever turn up where I am?" he challenged.

Turner learned that the man was an avid bowler, so she started to go bowling with him and his friends. Now the man is a regular attendee at the church.

The stories served to give participants ideas to build upon regarding their own communities, or questions to ask themselves. □



Photo courtesy Simon Criswick

Ten Nigerian and Chinese immigrants have joined a Nazarene church in Italy. (The Chinese women cannot be pictured for security reasons.)

Local church

# “Benvenuto!”

A newly planted Nazarene church in northern Italy has embraced a group of immigrants from Nigeria and China, as they build new lives in challenging circumstances.

By Simon Criswick

In the town of Borgo San Lorenzo, Italy, in a valley area near Florence, our Florence congregation discovered that there was an all-female group of 10 Nigerian and Chinese immigrants, aged 17-30, who were Christian. Yet, they live in an area without an evangelical church presence.

In December, we were put in touch with the owner of the facility where the young women had been given lodging for their first year in Italy, along with medical assistance and language learning. We invited them to a Christmas meal and worship in our church, Chiesa del Nazareno di Mugello, which is a new congregation planted by the Florence Church of the Nazarene.

These believers come with many different stories and testimonies of what God has done along the way.

Some have fled China due to persecution and arrests by the state to seek asylum in Europe. Others left

Nigeria because of serious problems within their families caused by religious, cultural and personal issues. In some cases the local ancestral religions require children to be set aside for the ancestral spirits in a ceremony, and opposing this can lead to being ostracised from the family and the community.

The stories of their journeys to Europe are full of both traumatic episodes and examples of God's grace. Some almost died on boat crossings. Others, who were lapsed believers, found new faith through the witness of Nigerian Christians travelling with them, or as a result of answered prayer for safety while crossing dangerous seas.

We have been visiting these young women, eating together, and trying to involve them as much as possible in our meetings and activities. In the first few days, one woman lost her 2-year-old daughter back home and was devastated. She was not even

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# Blessing of a parsonage in Zaragoza, Spain

By Pastor Joel Castro and Ignacio Pesado

In 2005, God allowed us to organize the first Church of the Nazarene in the city of Zaragoza, Spain. Obtaining our church property was a miracle, thanks to the prayers of the first people who formed the congregation. However, another challenge arose: we needed a pastoral residence. Therefore, we rearranged the upper part of the church building to serve as the pastor's home, although it was actually the pastor's office. We believed that God had a plan in the midst of this inconvenience.

During nine years of waiting, the mission of the church never wavered. We invested in starting a second church in another neighborhood of Zaragoza.

One day in early 2014, we were surprised to receive a phone call from District Superintendent Ignacio Pesado. He said the Spain District Advisory Board was willing to guarantee us the purchase of the much-needed parsonage, thanks in part to funds from our denomination's global Alabaster Offering that could provide our down payment. Glory to God! He was listening to our need.

While a mortgage was a challenge for our congregation, in those days Spain experienced an economic downturn and it was a good time for the purchase because the prices of

apartments had dropped.

In August 2014, we purchased a nearby apartment. But it still needed to be remodeled. Even though we owned the apartment, we could not live in it. We believed God was asking us to be patient and continue in prayer to wait for the help of a Work & Witness team in the remodeling.

Six months later we received financial assistance from the Western Mediterranean Field Strategy Coordinator Bruce McKellips, and thanks to that offering we were able to begin part of the remodeling. Some of the work was done by people in our congregation, and a group from the sister church of Barcelona. This was arranged thanks to the continued involvement of Pesado.

At the beginning of 2016, the missionary to Spain, Daniel Pesado, toured the United States to speak in Nazarene churches, and shared our need with the congregations he visited. It was the last congregation they visited, the United Community Church of the Nazarene in Indianapolis, who became interested in the renovation project.

Preparations were made, so that by the end of January, the Work & Witness team had completed the work that had begun months

## About Alabaster

*The Alabaster Offering provides funds for property and buildings around the world. We understand the church consists of the people of God, yet buildings for the purpose of ministry help provide a sense of permanence, enhance ministry efforts, and convey that the Church of the Nazarene has "put down roots." The entire Alabaster Offering goes toward the purchase of land and construction of churches, schools, medical facilities, and homes for missionaries and national workers.*

earlier. Rev. Bill Bean came with a group of 10 men to help us finish the floor, the painting, the kitchen, and the rooms with all the electrical hookups. By March of 2017, after having the services of light and gas connected, our family moved into our newly renovated apartment. Our two daughters were very happy for the blessings, and the older one actually said, "Dad, it was worth the wait."

Glory to God! There is no greater wonder than seeing the hand of God working for the same mission to which He has called us. For that, I once again want to thank all the Nazarenes who helped us to see a dream come true in our ministry, especially to Bruce McKellips, Ignacio and Daniel Pesado, Bill Bean, and many anonymous people who expressed interest in the purchase and renovation of our apartment. □

## ITALY: Church translates meetings

Continued from page 5

able to learn the full facts of what happened, or grieve, being so far away and powerless. We were able to pray with her and point her towards the Lord as her strength in extreme weakness. It is a blessing for a Christian to travel to a far away land and find believers there who know your Lord Jesus, too.

We have been meeting with these immigrants now for four months

and there have been difficulties. The house is isolated and hard to get to, and so transporting the girls 25 minutes to our church has been a challenge. We are praying for funding for a minibus, which could provide more regular transport, and make it possible for them to attend all our church activities.

They are learning Italian, and in the meantime we have been translating our meetings into English – but

we are a small group, with few resources. We need faith, courage and strength to believe that God will multiply, knowing that He has brought us in contact with these young women for a reason – that He might bless His church and that His church might be a blessing.

To help the church with this transportation need, offerings can be sent to the Italy District, with a memo "BSL immigrants". □



Testimony

## **The child who shouldn't have walked**

*Muna's story is one of God's grace since before her birth, and how He is using her to share His hope with the hopeless.*

**By Gina Grate Pottenger**

**Amman, Jordan** -- When Muna's mother was pregnant with Muna, she noticed the baby was not kicking like her previous babies had. The doctor assured her everything was fine.

But it wasn't.

When Muna was born, doctors diagnosed her with arthrogryposis, a disease in which the joints are constructed poorly, some muscles and joints may be entirely missing, and the limbs are curved. For Muna, this affected all four of her limbs. One shoulder and hip were detached. Her right knee was twisted to the side, and she had two club feet.

The doctors said she would never walk or live a normal life. They proposed doing some surgeries when she was two months old to try and mitigate the malformations so they wouldn't get worse while she grew.

Muna's mother, Majda, is a prayer warrior, and she took their daughter to God. The family asked their church and friends to pray. Her father, Suhail, and Majda also dedicated her to the Lord before her next doctor's appointment.

Her family did not have the money to pay for

the surgeries Muna needed, nor were there any doctors in Jordan who were experienced enough to do them. But they had relatives in Sweden, and one of them met a doctor in passing who had the training to do the surgery. After hearing about Muna, the doctor was willing to perform the surgeries.

But her family did not even have the money to send Muna and her mother to Sweden. So they prayed.

One day, a man approached Muna's uncle at the family's shop. The man gave him an envelope from King Hussein. When they opened it, they found the same amount that was needed to travel to Sweden and pay for the surgery. Through a series of connections, the king had heard about Muna and wanted to help.

In Sweden, a special team of doctors began the surgeries and treatments. The doctors cautioned that Muna's legs were missing entire muscles and said she would never walk.

So her family prayed. A few weeks later, the doctor noticed the baby moving her leg that was inside a cast from hip to ankle. The doctor revised the prediction: the child might walk someday, but only with technological

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# WALK: 'My goal is to show the love that changes'

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assistance, not on her own.

Muna's sister, who was 9 years old at the time, called their mother from Jordan and said she'd had a dream. Jesus had told her that Muna would have no more surgeries. In Sweden, Muna's mother was sleeping in a darkened room when she saw a vision of Jesus, so bright she couldn't look directly. He walked through the room toward the bed where the baby lay. Then He was gone.

Muna began to move her arm.

When they returned to the doctors, her mother insisted that they do new X-rays. So they agreed, and when they put the new X-rays against the previous ones, they saw that in the first films there was a gap due to the detachment of the joint. In the second one, the joint was attached.

The doctors put a halt to the surgeries for that time, suggesting she may need some when she was older, and the family returned to Jordan. Muna, who is now 24, has not had any more surgeries, just physical therapy. She also has use of all four limbs, and can walk without assistance of any device, although with difficulty.

Specialists also said that the muscles in her tongue were weak and she would not be able to speak normally. When she was three, she began speaking. Her first word was "hallelujah." Today she is fluent in both Arabic and English.

Many more miracles occurred throughout her life, including acceptance and full scholarship to an accounting program at one of the best universities in Jordan. She graduated in 2015 with a distinction grade of 86.3 percent.

In 2013, Muna yearned to be closer to God and understand His plans for her future, so she went on a prayer retreat in Egypt. During prayer, she saw a vision of Jesus walking with her through streets and buildings surfaced in gold. But when they entered a room, it was filled with desperate, tired and homeless people. Jesus commanded her to change the people's torn and dirty clothes. So she helped them change into bright, clean, white clothes. Then she saw the people eating at a table with Jesus because she had prepared them to enter heaven and join the feast of the Lamb.

"We entered (me and Jesus) [and] I saw another room. I saw a lady laying down on a bed (as if we were in the intensive care unit), and Jesus ordered me to tell her to wake up. At that time I understood my ministry will be dedicated to compassionate and healing ministry."

When she prayed about where she should start, she remembered Pastor Khalil, a Nazarene pastor in Amman, and also saw an image of another man of God.

After she returned home, Khalil told her that the church was initiating a ministry for Syrian refugees and he felt God wanted him to invite her to join them. She recognized this as confirmation from God.

For a year and a half, Muna served in the church's team of volunteers who visit refugees in their homes every week, and also helped with a discipleship group of 7th and 8th graders at the church.

The church serves 600 Syrian families and about 250 Iraqi families in the area. The volunteers deliver hygiene items, and spend time with them, building relationships and hearing their stories.

"The ministry is all about love and showing them that kind of love can change their lives," Muna said. The ministry shows "them they are accepted in Jordan. Lots of them as refugees feel shame. They feel rejected from this place. Once they felt [our] love, I believe they will touch the love of the Lord."

"I remember there was a woman who came to our church with a 10-year-old sick boy. There was liquid on his brain. I remember because of that liquid and the physical damage, he was about to lose his sight. And all his body, the legs, are becoming filled with water."

Although the woman was not a believer, in desperation she brought her son to the church for prayer. More than two months later, the woman was regularly attending a meeting for refugees, and she stood up to tell the group her son had been miraculously healed and that now she was following Jesus.

"We say, 'Even if you decide not to follow Jesus, we still love you. It's not conditional love,'" Muna said. "'We care for you as a human as God cares for you.'"

Because of the emotional struggles of the refugees who have been traumatized by the wars in their countries, Muna is now studying for her Master of Arts in Theology, in the Compassionate Ministry Stream at Nazarene Theological College in Manchester, U.K., and is also training to be a relational needs coach.

Muna looks back at her vision of the tired and weary people whose dirty clothes she changed for clean clothes, and believes this represents the refugees she is serving.

"My goal is to bring hope to the hopeless and to show the love that changes." □

## Where Worlds Meet

is the monthly newsletter for the Eurasia Region of the Church of the Nazarene.

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Website: [www.eurasiaregion.org](http://www.eurasiaregion.org)

## Our Team

GINA POTTENGER  
Communications Coordinator  
[gpottenger@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:gpottenger@eurasiaregion.org)

TEANNA SUNBERG  
Central Europe Communications Coordinator  
[tsunberg@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:tsunberg@eurasiaregion.org)

ERIN KETCHUM  
W. Mediterranean Communications  
Coordinator  
[eketchum@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:eketchum@eurasiaregion.org)

ZEE GIMON  
CIS Field Communications Coordinator  
[zgimon@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:zgimon@eurasiaregion.org)

RANDOLF WOLST  
Website Designer  
[rwolst@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:rwolst@eurasiaregion.org)

REBECCA MOISIO  
Regional Video Editor  
[rmoisio@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:rmoisio@eurasiaregion.org)

ARTHUR SNIJDERS  
Regional Director  
[awsnijders@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:awsnijders@eurasiaregion.org)

### Eurasia Regional Office

Postfach 1217  
8207  
Schaffhausen  
Switzerland

phone: (+49) 7734 93050  
email: [communications@eurasiaregion.org](mailto:communications@eurasiaregion.org)

Visit our website for more information:

[www.eurasiaregion.org](http://www.eurasiaregion.org)

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CONTACT GINA AT  
[COMMUNICATIONS@EURASIAREGION.ORG](mailto:COMMUNICATIONS@EURASIAREGION.ORG)  
[EURASIAREGION.ORG/VOLUNTEERS](http://EURASIAREGION.ORG/VOLUNTEERS)

*“Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”*

*Hebrews 7:25 NIV*

## Prayer requests

Please pray for the Nazarene churches in Italy, especially the Chiesa del Nazareno di Mugello as they welcome immigrants into their newly planted church family. Ask God to provide the resources to make transportation easier, and for Him to help these women integrate smoothly into their new country of residence.

Pray for the Nazarenes across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, as they seek God's big dreams for their communities, and find ways to take church outside the walls to people who need to know God's love.

Pray for the church in Zaragoza, Spain, as they continue to invest in their community out of the blessing of a more permanent building.

Pray for Arthur and Annemarie Snijders (regional director), the region's field leaders, district superintendents, pastors, educators, missionaries and lay workers. Ask God to unite the Nazarene church across Eurasia in Christlike love for each other and our communities and cultures.

Pray for Muna, her family, and the Nazarene churches in Amman, Jordan, as they witness to God's love, healing, and transformation among the refugees and local residents with whom they are living in community.

Pray that God would help every Nazarene in Eurasia to become mature, humble, compassionate Christlike disciples as we make Christlike disciples in our nations.