

where WORLDS meet

the monthly newsletter for the church of the nazarene in eurasia

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NAZARENE SCHOOL RISES ABOVE, TRANSFORMS CHILDRENS LIVES



By Gina Pottenger

Abdo Khanashat was standing near the window of his first floor office when the bomb hit.

The bomb ripped a hole in the Nazarene church sanctuary, which was attached to the Nazarene Evangelical School where Khanashat serves as director. During the drawn out years of the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) the threat of such bombings was very real and he had been forced to close the school multiple times. He even spent nine days living in a bomb shelter in the basement when it was too dangerous for him to navigate the bullet-riddled streets home to his family.

In spite of the 15 tumultuous years, during which time neighbors once looted the building, taking tables, chairs and other equipment, Khanashat kept things going almost singlehandedly.

Today, under Khanashat's direction, the Nazarene Evangelical School, which was founded in the 1960s, is a thriving educational center with more than 200 children enrolled, at least 50 of whom are from Syrian refugee families.

From orphanage to director

Khanashat grew up in a Lutheran orphanage in Lebanon. His father had died when he was 2 years old and his

mother was unable to care for him. From his early childhood, he was aware of God's presence in his life.

"He accompanied me since I was 9 years old. At that time I realized I have another Father who cares for me more than a human being Father. I didn't feel scared because I felt that really my Lord was with me and helping me in everything."

As he grew up, he sensed God calling him into ministry. The leaders at his orphanage suggested that he be a pastor. Missionaries offered to send him to Switzerland to study in a seminary. However, his mother did not want him to go so far away. So he obeyed and stayed in Lebanon.

Later he received a scholarship to study engineering in Germany. However, again his mother begged him not to go. Again, Khanashat obeyed. He believes it was God's will for him to stay in Lebanon.

When he graduated from school, he struck out on his own, taking his first job at a German school in Beirut as a teacher, where he worked for four years. It wasn't a good atmosphere at the school, however. The leaders belonged to another religion and were always trying to convert him.

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One day in 1967, his tailor invited him to attend the Church of the Nazarene in Ashrafiyeh. On his first Sunday, Khanashat realized he'd found something special.

"I said, 'This is what I'm looking for.'"

He became familiar with the Nazarene Evangelical School and applied to work there, being named principal. At that time there were 25 children and three teachers in a six-room school. He was shocked when he discovered the school had no license. He worked hard to obtain a deed for the property and to register the school with the government, eventually receiving their license in 1973. Then he put a big sign outside advertising the school.

By 1975, the school's attendance had vastly multiplied to 350 students. The school was well-known and well-loved.

War

Then that year, the Lebanese Civil War broke out. The school sat right on the line that divided the Christian neighborhood from the Muslim neighborhood. It became too dangerous for the teachers or students to travel to the school. It was shut down from 1975 to 1979, and during that time people from both neighborhoods broke into the school and stole everything.



Danielle: A Refugee Story



Danielle is a refugee from Syria who is attending the Nazarene Evangelical School in Beirut, Lebanon. Her story echoes what the UN-estimated 1 million displaced Syrian children have experienced, but she is exceptionally lucky to be continuing her education in Lebanon, unlike many other refugee children.*



My name is Danielle. I'm 11 from Syria. We have been in Lebanon for nine months.

My life in Syria was very nice and we were very happy there in Syria. I have a brother and a sister, 5 and 2. We get along a bit and we fight a bit. I am the boss.

I used to play the guitar for fun in Syria. I would draw. I like to draw nature, trees, house, school. The school was very nice: there were lots of students and many teachers. Math was my favorite subject.

When the war started, we were very afraid and we would hear constant sounds of bombing and bullets. We would stay home all the time, we were never separated. My father his goods were stolen four to five times -- he had a shop; but nothing happened to us. My parents were not always able to leave the house and buy food because many times there was shooting. What made me feel safe was the army which was protecting us.

The war affected me personally in that I was always very sad. What made me sad was that I had left school and left all my friends whom I love and I used to study with.

My family came to Lebanon so we would not die in Syria because my family was afraid for us. We faced problems on the road from the airport in Damascus because there was fighting going on while we were leaving. We saw burnt cars and dead bodies.

I brought a few things with me from Syria. I brought a few of the drawings I had done in Syria and a few toys and some clothes and that's it.

I don't like living in Lebanon very much. I don't feel very good being in this school. I want to go back to Syria. But I made a few friends: Phebe, Lamita and Nicole. I love the chapel and the Bible study a lot. They are very, very nice. I love the story of the blind man who was sitting and then Jesus came and healed him. Because this tells us the story if we have something bad in us or if we are sick, Jesus can heal us.

My parents think that coming to this school is something good because we are continuing our education and we haven't stopped.

When I grow up I want to be a painter; this is my dream. □

Following a 15-year civil war from 1975-1990, Lebanon has struggled to maintain a precarious peace. But just across the border in Syria, civil war has raged for the past three years. More than 1 million Syrians have fled into Lebanon, where they are struggling to make ends meet each day. Many of their children have had a major interruption in their education, yet they cannot afford to send them to the Lebanese schools.

Through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, the Nazarene Evangelical School has been able to give 50 Syrian children the chance to continue their education. If not for this, the children would be holed up in tiny one- or two-room apartments with nothing to do all day, said Principal Marlene Mshantaf. They could play on the street, but many Lebanese people are not happy to have Syrians living among them, and the children sometimes face bullying from other kids, according to dean of students Nabil Habiby. At the Nazarene school, however, they are accepted and treated equal with the other children.

It has been hard to integrate the Syrians into the school. In Syria, they primarily study Arabic, but in Lebanese schools, children learn English from an early age, and by grade 3 they are studying math and science in English. The Syrian children are unable to keep up because they have not studied English. So the school opened an after-school program with the Syrian children, focusing on improving their English, and to give them extra attention.

Mshantaf said the Syrian children are very shy, afraid to ask questions and "have a lot of anxiety, a lot of fear, a lot of sadness" because of what they saw and experienced during the war in their home country. But as the teachers take a loving interest, and as they begin to make friends with the Lebanese children, the Syrian kids are starting to adjust and feel more safe and comfortable.

"Before, when they used to come ask me, their heads were down, they don't even dare to look in my eyes," Mshantaf said. "Now they will look in your eye and they will ask you. We can see a lot of changes." □



*Name changed for privacy and security reasons.



Some also destroyed the walls on the east side of the school so that fighters could carry their wounded through the school property to safety within their neighborhoods.

The bomb that hit the school's rooftop destroyed all the records for both the school and the church.

In the early war years, the Nazarenes were unable to communicate with the greater church outside the country.

"The war was very terrible," he said. "We had no gasoline and sometimes no bread. How did God support us I don't know. We couldn't contact anybody. No telephones, no cell phones, no means of connection, no post. I felt alone."

As time went by, conditions in the area around the school improved. Khanashat decided to reopen the school on days without bombing. The teachers went on a day-to-day contract, meaning they were simply paid for each day that they taught. Khanashat braved the dangerous streets and crossed blockades to bring the salary to the teachers in their homes so they would have money to buy food.

The school also provided a shelter below the school for up to 150 neighbors during bombings.

Turnaround

In 1985, the situation again improved and school resumed regularly. Marlene Mshantaf was appointed as principal to the school.

Khanashat was finally able to get a message through to the then director of the Eurasia Region, Dr. Franklin Cook, and the education coordinator, John Haines. They were

eager to hear news from the Nazarenes in Lebanon. It was still too dangerous to go to the airport, so Khanashat took a boat to Cyprus and from there flew to the regional office in Büsingen, Germany, where he met them to discuss the situation. They were ready to help. They organized several



shipping containers with food, clothes and other needed items.

In 1986, Khanashat decided to expand the school, which at that time served grades 1 to 6. He added grades 7 to 9. With donated funds, he built another floor on the school, rebuilt the church – fixing the bombed hole in the ceiling – and renovated the bathrooms. In 1990, they opened a library, a laboratory and a room for computer training.

Recently, they added a rooftop playground for the smallest children. And after years of enduring the loss of publicly provided electricity multiple times per day, buying electricity from a private generator owner nearby for \$900 per

month to keep lights on and computers running, a donor gave \$7,000 through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries so the school could purchase its own generator. They call this generous provision a true miracle.

Today the school has enrolled 210 children aged 3 to 15 years. The children come from multiple religious backgrounds, but parents understand that they will learn Christian principles at the school. Every day the children attend chapel where they hear Bible stories and the Gospel, and once a week they attend Bible classes.

And now it is a safe place for the new flood of Syrian refugee children who are emerging from a civil war in their own country to find safety and continue their education in Beirut – a city that understands civil war. This year the school is serving 50 Syrian children. Twenty-five of the children are supported through a \$50,000 grant from Nazarene Compassionate Ministries. □

By pressing the play button below, a new window will open to our Vimeo page to view: A School with a Mission - Lebanon



Or view it at:
<https://vimeo.com/85333554>

Dozens and dozens of ministry projects in the Eurasia Region are included in a list of 1,400 projects gathered for the purpose of celebrating Nazarene Missions International's (NMI) upcoming 100th anniversary.

A 100th birthday or anniversary is a big milestone that cannot go by unnoticed, without reflection, or without a celebration and Nazarene Missions International (NMI) is doing just that. In 2015, NMI will have been encouraging, challenging and supporting the work of the Church of the Nazarene for 100 years.

The fruits of this activity can be seen with the Nazarene holiness message now in 159 world areas. God has led our church to join Him in his mission in and to all the nations.

To celebrate, each of the 461 districts worldwide are invited to be directly involved in God's work through the Church of the Nazarene in another world area. It is also an opportunity to learn more about ministry in one location, partner with them in prayer, develop a partner-relationship with another district in a different region or part of the world, and be encouraged by how God can use your local churches in his global mission.

A list of specific ministry needs

from all regions were collected. These are needs to further the work of the Nazarene church in that area. Every district can choose one of the needs as a project to complete by October 8, 2015.

For instance, one project in the Eurasia Region is to fund the Acts of God after-school program in



Damascus, Syria. Meeting five days a week from 2 to 5 p.m., this program helps 130 refugee children from Iraq in grades kindergarten through 12 who are not able to attend regular school. The project goal is \$24,000 USD and would fund counseling, discipleship, computer training, and science instruction, as well as Arabic and English. The funding may also help to provide warm clothing to the students in the winter months.

Another Eurasia Region project, for \$1,500, is to purchase motorcycles for area leaders on the Eastern District of India. The district has 900 churches, and it is divided so that one pastor in an area serves anywhere from five to

60 churches. They use bicycles to visit the their churches, which is not a very efficient way to get around. Motorcycles would allow them to more easily visit churches, pastors and local leaders, provide training, conduct meetings and prayer days and more.

If started now, your district has one and a half years to complete your selected project. Once your district has sent the funds, or sent a team of people to meet the ministry need, the receiving district will apply the gift to the need, contact you, and share the outcome as to how the ministry need was

met.

The goal of the celebration is that every district in the world will have completed one project by October 8, 2015.

Contact your District NMI President, Regional NMI Coordinator Heidi Bowes, or go to www.nazarenemissions.org/nmi100 for more information. To see the list of projects, visit <http://nmi.nazarene.org/NMI100/nmi100Guidelines.html> and click the round buttons that offer different ways to sort the project list.

Don't delay: Accept the party invitation and start the celebration right away!

Know the Nazarene news

Want to know the latest breaking news about Nazarenes around the world? Read NCNNews.com, the news website of the global Church of the Nazarene.

New stories are added weekly from all seven world regions. You can also sign up for the latest news headlines to be sent to your email inbox by visiting <http://www.ncnnews.com/nphweb/html/ncn/subscribe.jsp>.

Follow NCN News on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/ncnnews>. Or get the tweets on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ncnnews>. □



ENGAGE

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Watch exciting video testimonies, read compelling personal mission stories and learn about fascinating mission strategies with *Engage* magazine. New mission features and stories are added weekly at the website, www.engagemagazine.com, which is the online mission magazine of the global Church of the Nazarene.

Many stories are in Spanish; articles often come with discussion questions so they can be used in a small group or Sunday school class.

Keep up to date on the latest mission stories across our denomination by signing up for *Engage's* biweekly email newsletter, at <http://nazarene.org/subscriber.html>.

Follow us on Facebook, at <https://www.facebook.com/engagemissions>, or Twitter, at <https://www.twitter.com/engagemagazine>, for links to the latest stories in your newfeed. □

P rayer & Fasting

Regional Director Arthur Snijders invites you to join the Eurasia Region in a united prayer and fasting initiative starting March 7.

Field strategy coordinators, district superintendents and local pastors have been asked to lead the monthly prayer and fasting effort on the first Friday of every month, from March 7 to September 5.

The objective of this seven-month emphasis is to bring Nazarenes across the Eurasia Region together in a new spirit of interconnectedness and unity around God's mission.

The theme for the initiative is drawn from Philippians 2: 1-5a (NIV):

"Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."

Each month we will focus on one section of this scripture in our prayers, and also focus our prayers on requests from one field of the Eurasia Region. A prayer coordinator has been appointed for each field and this person will help to distribute the month's themed



prayer and the list of prayer requests to all who wish to participate.

The Eurasia Region communications team will also post prayer requests, short themed prayers and prayer and fasting resources on our regional website, at www.eurasiaregion.org.

The following people will serve as prayer coordinators for each field:

Central Europe: Steve and Rachel Beiler, sarjalbania@gmail.com

Eastern Mediterranean: Seta Green, setakejelian@gmail.com

CIS: Alexander Zelensky, godssunflower@gmail.com

Northern Europe: Rev Colin McConkey, colinmccconkey@gmail.com

India: To be decided

South Asia: Silvia Sinha, silvia_sinha@yahoo.com

Western Mediterranean: Shannon Herndon, shannonherndon@gmail.com

We will pray for each field in the following order:

March: Central Europe

April: Eastern Mediterranean

May: CIS Field

June: Northern Europe

July: India

August: South Asia

September: Western

Mediterranean

Join us for a new spirit of unity in prayer and fasting this year!

prayer & fasting



*“Rejoice always;
pray continually;
give thanks in all
circumstances, for this
is God’s will for you in
Christ Jesus.” (NIV)
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

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Prayer Requests

- Please pray for the leaders and teachers at the Nazarene Evangelical School in Beirut. Ask God to give them wisdom, compassion and love for their students and the parents. Pray for the children, that God would speak to each one and draw them all into transformative relationship with Him. Pray that God would continue to provide resources for the school to serve all the students who need to be there.
- Pray for God to bless Yara and her family. Ask Him to give her courage, strength and growth in her walk with God, and that she will be a light to her friends and loved ones. Pray that her husband will also accept Christ.
- Pray for the Syrian children who have fled to Lebanon and are going through grief, disorientation, sadness and trying to adjust to a new life and a new culture. Ask God to be especially close to them and that He would give them strength and hope.
- Pray for the Eurasia Region’s prayer and fasting initiative, that many leaders and laity would participate in this seven-month journey of unified praying and fasting, as we seek God’s face.

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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