



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
EURASIA

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Letter from the Regional Director

‘Throw your nets on the other side’

For many people, having one district assembly a year is more than enough. So it is hard to explain what happens when we travel with the general superintendent in an assembly month. In January we covered 12 assemblies, and in March eight. We traveled to many places in a short time: Germany, Scotland, Ukraine, etc. None of them is like the other – different cultures, different time zones, different languages. We worshipped in a packed church in Paisley, Scotland, and listened to the new ways to respond to secularization. But we also were part of a much smaller assembly in France, where we were the only white-skinned people, enjoying the fellowship of brothers and sisters from Haiti, Martinique Cape Verde, and other French-speaking countries, and the district superintendent comes from Chad.

The history of the Church of the Nazarene in France has been one of much sowing and a small harvest. Several times, they felt that they took two steps forward, only to be forced to go a step back, and sometimes another step back. What to do when all the faithfulness, the prayers, the creative and new approaches, the investment in people do not seem to result in a strong church? How to be a church that is seeking the key that unlocks the hearts of people?

However, people and missionaries remained faithful. They did not lose their confidence in the gospel. They were a bit like Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 13:1-33). Not losing sight of the end goals: developing an independent, self-supporting, indigenous holiness church in France.

But a couple of years ago, a missionary couple was sent to fill a supporting role – more following than leading. And that helped an ordained elder on the district, who was planting a church while driving a taxi for a living, to pluck up enough courage to agree to be the district superintendent. “Throw your net on the other side of the boat,” Jesus said. And that is what Pastor Joseph and Brian did.

That was two years ago. This March assembly, we found our Nazarene people had doubled in numbers. They worshipped and worked in new unity. Pessimism was gone, people gave sacrificially, sang with joy, planned

and prayed for new work. Nazarenes from many nations are reaching those who are spiritually receptive.

It filled my heart with gratitude: at last the Lord gave us a new way to serve Him in France. In several ways, I saw a turnaround from the past. I see turnarounds like this as times of sanctification: humbling ourselves before the Lord and one another, crucifying our egos, accepting new ways because the Spirit understands France better than we do. We relearn that in Christ, being circumcised or uncircumcised does not matter, only whether we are a new creation.

Missions is very much working our way through challenges and failure, but without losing our confidence in the gospel. The Spirit has abilities to unlock the hearts of our neighbors, our surrender, our prayers. Our sacrifices matter to the progress of the gospel.

- Please pray for the districts that go through leadership changes. New district superintendents need training, new routines. They deal with legal issues, pastoral needs. This past year 10 DSs were appointed.
- Please thank the Lord for the ministry of Dr. Gustavo Crocker as jurisdictional general superintendent (JGS), who finishes his two-year term of ministry with Eurasia. Later this year, our new JGS will be Dr. Eugenio Duarte.
- Please pray for all the preparations of the General Assembly that will take place in June 2017. In all districts delegates are getting ready for this global event.

-- Arthur Snijders
Eurasia Regional Director



The tiny kitchen and the hearts bigger than the world.

Local church

Come to the table

Volunteers grapple with a tiny church kitchen to cook and distribute 100 meals to elderly, disabled people and refugee children.

Beirut, Lebanon -- Five days a week, volunteers rub shoulders and bump elbows in the cramped, narrow kitchen next to the Beirut Church of the Nazarene, in the Achrafieh neighborhood, as they cook about 100 hot, healthy meals for Syrian refugee students and neighborhood shut-ins, all of whom struggle to get adequate nutrition each week.

Imagine cooking so much food with a standard household stove and oven, a basic sink and an average-sized refrigerator. To compound the difficulty, the kitchen is small and narrow. In such a small space, it doesn't take much to have "too many cooks in the kitchen."

Trying to gain more space, they utilize the adjoining rooftop by having enclosed it with corrugated plastic and adding a sink and some additional workspace.

Marie-Claude, Rose and Theresa, and now Syrian refugee Naseef, spend hours here each day, washing vegetables, cooking rice and meat, then packaging the hot meals for about 85 nearby elderly and disabled people and for the refugee students.

Agape Table began when people in the area learned that the church was already cooking hot meals for Syrian refugee children enrolled in their educational program, which helps the children eventually qualify for acceptance into official Lebanese schools.

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AGAPE: Elderly woman cares alone for 50-year-old disabled son

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People suggested the church also cook hot meals for elderly and disabled people who are not able to walk, or who struggle to shop and cook for themselves. The church readily agreed.

Marie-Claude has gotten to know many of the families enrolled in Agape Table. The one nearest to her heart is a woman named Nadine*, and her son Ramy.

The first time Marie-Claude went to visit Nadine, she assumed Nadine would be a young woman with a small son.

She was shocked when the door opened and saw that Nadine is an 85-year-old woman who is giving full-time care to her 50-year-old mentally disabled son Ramy*. The mother and her son live in a one-room apartment with just a mattress on the floor and a sofa. They share a kitchen and bathroom with a neighbor.

"I wasn't feeling good that day. My daughter was sick; I was feeling down," Marie-Claude recalls. But when she saw the mother's challenging situation, Marie-Claude was deeply moved by the woman's powerful love for her son.

Ramy needs full-time care. He cannot bathe himself or even chew his own food. Nadine had been given the opportunity to turn her son over to a care home. But she refused.

"She said, 'I will not leave my son until I die. When I die, you take him to wherever you want.' Eighty-five years old, taking care of a man. I started crying, and whenever I feel down, I remember her. I shouldn't be nagging or complaining."

Now, Marie-Claude blends and purees Ramy's meals so he can swallow them easier, and enjoys returning to visit the family on occasion. Thankfully, the family also receive love and support

from their neighbors and local church.

No matter how rewarding the ministry is, cooking so many meals in such a tight space isn't easy.

Due to the lack of storage, Marie-Claude cannot buy larger amounts of food items at wholesale prices. To keep the meals within the small budget, she shops sales and deals throughout the city each week. Sometimes she stores things at home.

The up-front cost for the cheapest batch of food to feed about 100 people in one day is never less than \$60. Yet, it's important for the students, as well as the elderly and disabled people they feed, for the food to be nutritious and fresh. Such things as fresh vegetables, fruit and meat cost more than junk food.

"Every day I go myself with my car to get all the goods," she said. "If we had a bigger place, it would be easier and cheaper. It's very difficult, we're working in a very small place [with] a small budget."

"But when I see them eating and when I go visit the elders and see how happy they are with each meal, you forget everything about anything you're facing."

Andrew Salameh, pastor of the Beirut Church of the Nazarene, and superintendent of the Lebanon District, shared her sentiments about the significance of hot meal ministry at the church.

"Sometimes I watch the small refugee children, how they are eating joyfully and I remember our Lord's words: 'I was hungry and you fed me ...,'" he said. □

**Some names changed for privacy*

Volunteerism

'Love is the number one language'

Anderson Martinez talks about serving refugees in Greece through M+Power

Anderson Martinez said he was willing to go anywhere he was needed. Well, he was needed to help in Greece, as part of a team serving refugees who had fled violence and civil war in their countries.

So he spent his summer break from university near Thessaloniki, where he visited refugees in their homes, helped them improve their English, played games, cooked together and just hung out.

Martinez is originally from Colombia, and has lived in the United Kingdom for 10 years, where he is part of the Longsight Church of the Nazarene.

When he heard at the Eurasia Regional Conference in 2015 about the region's M+Power initiative to help train and deploy Nazarenes into volunteer cross-cultural service, he wanted to go.

"I started feeling like I want to do something else than just attending Sunday services," he said.

A three-month summer assignment worked well for his university schedule.

In Greece, some people still live in refugee camps, but some of the most vulnerable families had been moved into private apartments or houses in the

nearest town. The team ministered to both groups of people.

"It was a really beautiful time because you hear about the situation in the news. You hear a thousand refugees are coming to Greece, or 10,000, but then when you go to a camp, those numbers you hear in the news become faces, and then those faces have names, and those names become part of your everyday life," he said.

The Nazarene volunteers in Greece worked in partnership with another evangelical church. Through combining

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Important as any other kids

"I found them last summer, looking through the trash for food," Gesti, pastor of the Church of the Nazarene in Kombinat, Albania, told me in October 2015 as we were on our way to visit the child development centre (CDC) that his congregation had established.

"Two sisters and a brother; the oldest was 12 at the time, and none of them had ever been to school. They live in a single room about half an hour's walk from the church. Their mother is a prostitute and takes her clients home, so during the day the kids go around and look through the trash, trying to find things to eat."

When we arrived at the CDC – taking place in a small rented room with large, faded Disney pictures on the outside wall – the kids were all diligently doing their homework. Gesti introduced me, and the children immediately welcomed me. Several children came up and hugged me, among them the two sisters. Their hugs were long and fierce, revealing how desperately they longed for affection, but also suggesting: I can see that you're different, that you care for me; I feel loved in this place.

And that is not something the children here can take for granted. Not just the three siblings, but all of the children who attend the CDC come from broken families. Their parents are unemployed. Many are addicted to alcohol or drugs. Several of the families live in a complex of abandoned factories. The children suffer from poverty, neglect and abuse. Some parents simply don't care what happens to their kids. All of the families, several of whom are Roma or locally labelled as "gypsies," are marginalized by society: the sort of people that nobody bothers about, that aren't even really noticed.

In the Nazarene child development centre, these children have discovered a new world. Established in September

2014, the CDC has become a haven of peace in their troubled lives. Due to their home situations, most of them would have no chance to succeed in school – or even bother to go. The CDC is giving them a future as well as a present that's worth living.

"I like to come to the CDC because I feel loved here," Lydia, the elder of the two sisters, said.

For two hours each weekday morning or early afternoon, the children receive homework help and assistance with their school lessons; the teachers explain with much patience and individual attention especially for children who are slower learners. Since many families cannot afford to pay for school materials or textbooks, the CDC provides these where necessary. Hygiene and other topics of everyday life are addressed in a respectful, loving manner.

"I want to keep coming to the CDC because I want to learn more," Elena, the younger sister, explained.

But the CDC isn't all work – it's also fun. Lessons are rounded off with games and creative tasks. Trips to parks and picnics are major highlights in the summer. Each child's birthday is celebrated with a cake and a song, and special programs are offered for Christmas and during the summer holidays. At noon, all of the children gather for a healthy lunch, usually soup, vegetables and fruit. For several children, it's the only real meal of the day.

It is wonderful to witness what a major difference the CDC has made in the lives of these children in a short time. □

To read the full story, visit Engage magazine: engagemagazine.com/content/important-any-other-kids



GREECE: Martinez will visit refugees in their new homes this summer

Continued from page 5



efforts, they were able to go beyond the basic support of food and clothing distribution provided by the United Nations and other large non-government organizations.

"It was like a family relationship. They were happy when we come to visit them," he said.

Martinez does not speak Greek or Arabic. Yet, he found ways to communicate without language. Sometimes it took drawing pictures.

"They see you are making the effort to talk to them. There's many ways to communicate. You don't need the language. I think love is the number one language."

Most of the people he spent time with have now moved on to Germany, France and the Netherlands. Martinez is planning this summer to visit them with another volunteer he worked with. Their goal will be to help these families connect with churches in their new communities for further support and relationship.

Martinez said that his experience of serving cross-culturally has changed the way he looks at people he doesn't yet know.

"Sometimes you put labels on people. If they look different, you already judge them: 'This person doesn't look like I like, so I'm not going to make effort to speak to this person.' But when you are there, you meet people [who] cannot change their clothes for two to three days, or take a shower because there are no available places to take a shower. That doesn't mean this person is bad or less than me. I learned I should stop judging people and putting labels and instead should make the effort and give them the time to interact and to see who the person is."

For those who feel a tug toward cross-cultural service, Martinez said, "If you feel God is calling you, go. I understand sometimes you have fear, sometimes you fear that maybe it's not your language, [you don't have] enough money. But if God is calling you, He knows and He will support you and He will make the connections you need to go there."

"Once you are there, just trust in Him and you will learn whatever you need to do His work there." □

Is God speaking to you about volunteering cross-culturally?

Check out possible places of service on the M+Power web page: www.eurasiaregion.org/volunteers

Positions range from 3 months to 2 years. Each volunteer is paired with a coach and a mentor during their time of service.

Apply to attend a Eurasia Mission Orientation (EMO) near you to learn more and receive cross-cultural training.

Upcoming EMOs are:

- *Nepal, May 15-18*
- *The Netherlands, August 4-6*
- *Ukraine, October 6-8*



CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY & CONVENTIONS

nazarene.org/ga

21-30 June 2017

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Manchester, England

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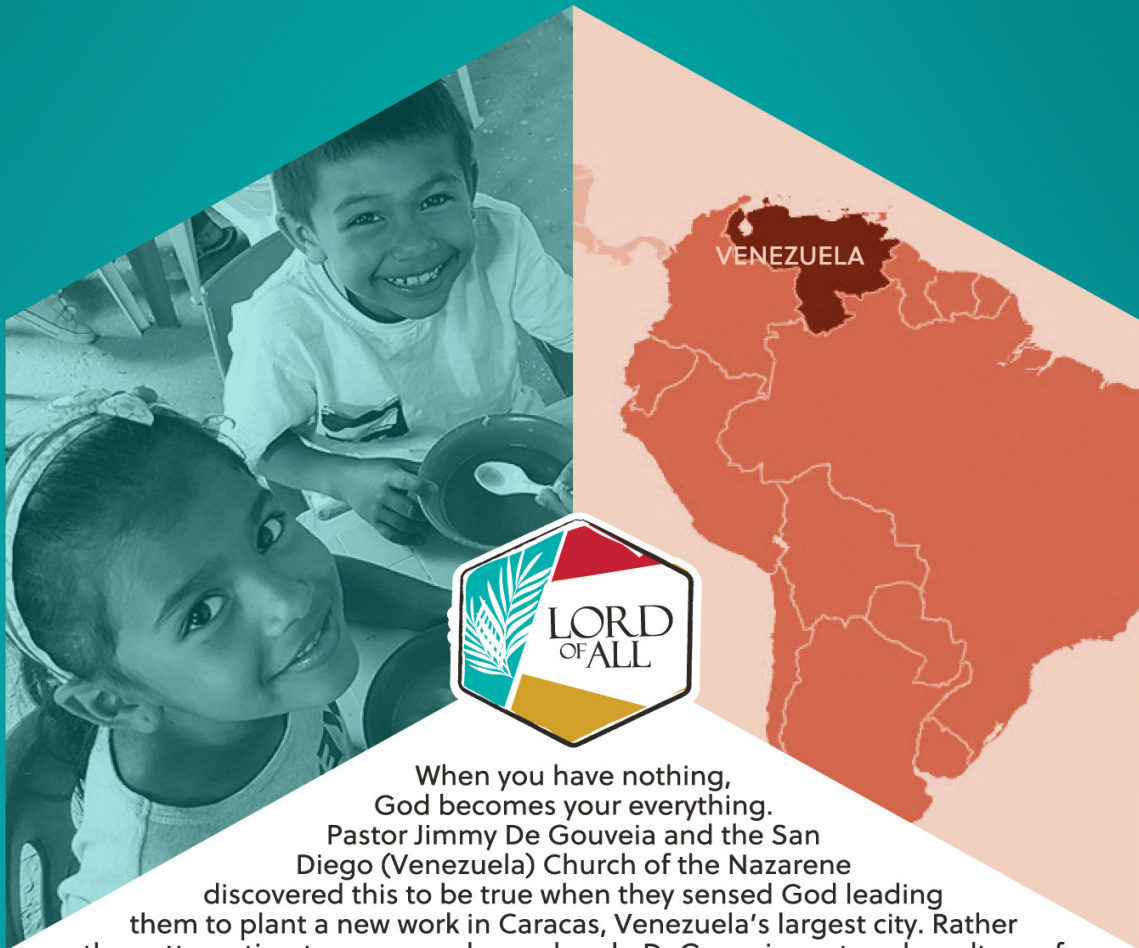


Contact rgac@eurasiaregion.org for more information.

WORLD EVANGELISM FUND EASTER OFFERING

DATE:

Easter Sunday



When you have nothing,
God becomes your everything.
Pastor Jimmy De Gouveia and the San
Diego (Venezuela) Church of the Nazarene
discovered this to be true when they sensed God leading
them to plant a new work in Caracas, Venezuela's largest city. Rather
than attempting to grow one large church, DeGouveia nurtured a culture of
church planting. In the past four years, the congregation planted
four missions meeting in homes and involving 400 regular
attendees. Through these church plants and other
programs, the Church of the Nazarene in
Venezuela is impacting the people
of Caracas for the
Lord of all.

*"The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses
all who call on Him." — Romans 10:12b*



nazarene.org/generosity

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"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

Ephesians 1:7 NIV

Prayer requests

Please pray for Marie-Claude, Rose, Theresa and the other volunteers who cook each week for up to 100 people in need of healthy, nutritious meals in Beirut, Lebanon. Ask God to provide resources to continue this ministry, and for many to be transformed by God's love expressed through the hard work of the Achrafieh Church of the Nazarene.

Pray for the refugees who encountered Christian volunteers in Greece, as they settle into new homes in Europe. Ask God to help them connect to loving church families in their communities. Also ask God to send more volunteers within Eurasia to advance the kingdom, transforming people, communities and nations.

Pray for the children enrolled at the child development center in Kombinat, Albania, that their lives would be transformed forever by realizing God's love for them. Ask God to transform their families and the whole community, as well, through the church's ministry to their children.

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