

WHERE WORLDS MEET

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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
EURASIA

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Youth ministry is a 'Road to Emmaus' journey

By Diego Lopez

I went to college to study youth ministry and theology, mostly because at the time it made sense. It was an available course at Nazarene Theological College, and I was interested in working with youth. Little did I know how it would grow and develop me as a person, and help me to influence those young people and leaders whose journeys I have been part of over the years.

In my youth ministry training, I was exposed to subjects such as understanding others, pedagogy (or, as it is also known, informal education), advocacy, youth work in the community, pastoral care for youth, etc. All those subjects formed my journey in youth ministry.

The story in Luke 24: 13-35 of the road to Emmaus is one that resonates with my style of youth ministry. In this story, the resurrected Jesus met a couple of his followers on their journey to Emmaus. He did not impose Himself or reveal who He was or any particular agenda. But along the way, He listened and accompanied them as they explored their concerns. As a result of His presence and conversation, they invited Him into their house because they felt at home and comfortable around Jesus. His time with them helped open their hearts to what the Holy Spirit was saying to them.

Likewise, youth ministry is a journey. It is a two-way road. Young people have as much to teach us as we have to give to them.

We, as leaders, tend to start from the perspective that we know it all. We can often disregard what the youth know and what God is already doing in their lives. We should look at our relationship as walking the journey with them.

To journey with youth, we need to find points of connection with them – maybe a common interest or a hobby or sport. Perhaps we can draw them in through their technological expertise, or understanding of the world. Youth always have something to contribute.

When I was given the opportunity to coordinate the youth ministry in Eurasia, in consultation with leaders



Learn more about Nazarene Youth International in Eurasia: www.eurasianyl.org.

across the region, we made youth ministry training a priority. The purpose of regional NYI coordinator is to equip youth leaders at the local grassroots level to more effectively minister to youth. Every international training should make a local difference for young people in their church.

Nazarene Theological College in Manchester has helped us develop our training by allowing Rev Louise Kenyon to design and tailor a training tool called Nexūs to meet our current needs. Nexūs is an intensive course over a minimum of two-weekends in which people are invited to prepare themselves better for youth leadership.

Over the past two years, we have delivered Nexūs training in eight locations across Eurasia, with 132 students participating from 22 different districts. The training is delivered in two segments of one, two or three days long. The material has been translated into seven languages. It is our goal to reach all 52 districts of Eurasia in the next three years.

Our most recent Nexūs was held in Manchester. Alexandra Marinescu, from the Bucharest Church of the Nazarene in Romania (Biserica Nazarineanului Binescuvantarea, Bucarest) took part. She says that this training opened her eyes to God's calling to youth ministry, while also providing her with the tools to answer His call. (Read her story on page 6).

Thank you to all of those who have supported us and opened the doors of your churches to deliver Nexūs.

Please pray for more resources and doors to be open so that we can continue equipping youth leaders across our region and beyond. □

-- Diego Lopez is the Eurasia Region youth leader.



Two countries, one body

Congregations come together across Europe through shared need for ministry space

By Gina Grate Pottenger

For several years, Nazarenes in Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, worshiped and conducted community outreach in a three-bedroom apartment of a residential building.

The highly missional community maximized the space as best they could. They split their growing kids' club and vacation Bible school into shifts so they could fit all the children. They ran a knitting project for Syrian-Armenian women who had fled the war in Syria and found refuge in Yerevan. They also held a youth group for teenagers. About 35 adults crowded into the living room for Sunday worship or training events. The group even organized their ongoing outreach ministry to a nearby town from the apartment.

"It was a 'multi-purpose' apartment," says Pastor Rita Lao with a grin.

But the small space limited their potential for growth.

The Nazarenes prayed and fasted for a time, asking God to provide them with a bigger space that would also give them credibility in the community. Their prayers centered on the promises in Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the

plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future," and in Isaiah 54:2, "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes."

In early 2016, Trino Jara, leader of the Yerevan group, visited one of the Nazarene churches in Berlin and gave a short presentation about how God is working through Nazarenes in Armenia. He mentioned the space limitations facing the group in Armenia.

It was a problem this church in Berlin understood all too well. A number of years ago, after the merger with another Nazarene church in Berlin, they had sold their old building to buy something more centrally located to the area where they are meeting now. But this became more difficult than they had anticipated.

The Berlin church had searched and searched, but never found a building and property that fit their needs and their budget. Because they didn't want to leave the community, they continued renting a facility. The funds remained in their bank account.

The pastor of the Berlin church empathized with the Nazarenes in Yerevan and felt moved to act.

"I felt somehow that the Lord wanted us to do something about that," he said.

see "ARMENIA" • page 4

ARMENIA: Sharing with others is stewardship

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At the following board meeting, the church board discussed the idea of helping their brothers and sisters in Yerevan buy their own building.

“We were pretty quickly ready to go for it,” said the SDMI president. “Then we had a meeting at church. We wanted the whole church to be behind it.”

The board presented their proposal to the congregation, expecting some reluctance or at least numerous questions and lengthy discussion.

“But there hardly were any really serious questions about if we should do that. The church immediately said, ‘Oh yes, we want to do that.’”

And they were also unified in stating that what they shared did not belong to them in the first place; it was God’s. Thus, the pastor and congregation have requested to remain publicly anonymous.

“I think it’s good stewardship,” said one of the board members. “God had given the money, so we provided. It’s God who made it possible for us to give generously.”

After the pastor informed Jara about the church’s intentions, Jara gathered the Yerevan Nazarenes together, saying only that he wanted to share good news with them. With everyone crowded into the three-bedroom apartment, he introduced the Berlin pastor to the group through a Skype video call. Together they told them about the Berlin church’s belief that God wanted them to share some of what they been unable to use on themselves for the new building in Yerevan.

“Some people were crying,” recalls Lao. “We had a couple of new people there who were surprised. They didn’t comprehend how a church in Berlin, who never knew us, would give what they had for us to have a space. It was a beautiful testimony as a church and to the people who were new to us.”

The Yerevan group prayed until the right space became available – a three-story building that had been part of a former kindergarten, just seven minutes’ walk from the apartment complex where they’d been ministering for years. Their new building has rooms spacious enough for larger kids’ club and VBS gatherings, as well as a basement room for combined worship. There is a large kitchen, and also the possibility to add one more floor on top.

When the purchase took place, they introduced themselves to their new neighbors, who were all



“They didn’t comprehend how a church in Berlin, who never knew us, would give what they had for us to have a space. It was a beautiful testimony...”

- Pastor Rita Lao

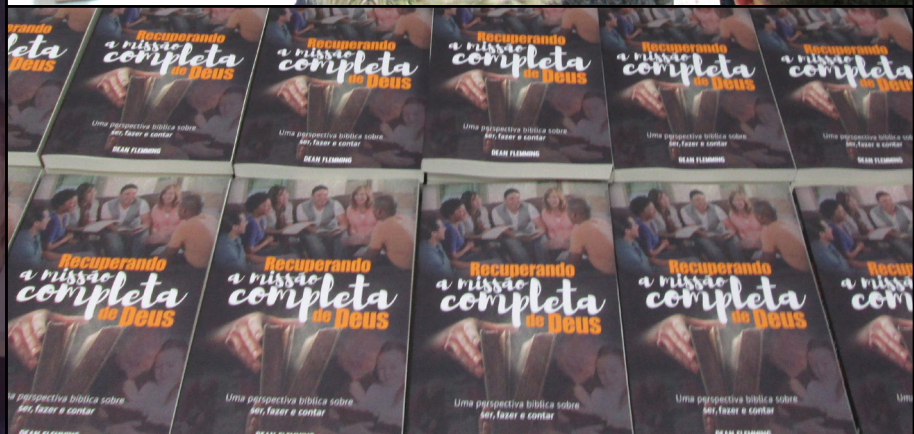
favorable to the Nazarenes’ presence and purpose. More children began coming to the kids’ activities. Regular attenders of all ages began inviting friends and family.

The Yerevan Nazarenes have now been meeting in the building for about a year, and dedicated it to the Lord during Armenia’s annual Nazarene District Assembly in March 2018, when representatives from the four Nazarene groups meeting in Armenia were able to gather in the space. For previous annual assemblies, the groups were forced to rent space when having the assembly in Yerevan.

Eight members from the Berlin church attended the assembly as representatives from their church.

“When we went there it was almost like family,” said the NMI president of the Berlin church. “It is almost like we have a church building now – far away, but close on our hearts.”

“Eurasia Region believes that healthy Nazarene churches develop in an interdependent way. We really need each other,” said Arthur Snijders, Eurasia Region director. “This example of German Nazarenes and Armenian Nazarenes connecting and helping the other is a beautiful expression of what it means to be the body of Christ together. Generosity, faith, love for one another, mission, are all part of this real life story. ☐



Theological education

Portugal District celebrates translation of theology book on mission

By Gina Grate Pottenger

About 75 people gathered on May 1 in Lisbon to celebrate the publication of a Portuguese translation of Dr. Dean Flemming's book, Recovering the Full Mission of God: A Biblical Perspective on Being, Doing and Telling.

Over an entire year, *Recuperando a Missão Completa de Deus* was translated by three people representing the Portuguese Language Literature Committee. The book provides a Wesleyan-Arminian resource for theological education and preparing people for ministry, according to Raquel Pereira, Portuguese Nazarene Literature Coordinator in Portugal.

However, the content of the book is accessible to any reader, she added. With

discussion questions at the end of each chapter, the volume can be a resource to Portuguese-speaking Sunday school classes and small groups anywhere in the world.

"The dynamics of being, doing and telling in the Christian life from a biblical perspective is relevant to a broad audience," Pereira said. "Besides our ministerial students, the present ministers (pastors included) and all God's people who want to be faithful to God's call to participate in His mission in the world will benefit greatly from reading this book."

The book launch was part of Theological Conversations Day, for which Flemming was a main speaker. The event was hosted jointly by the European Nazarene College Portugal Learning Center and District Ministerial Studies Board. Participants separated into small groups to discuss missional ecclesiology in Revelation, based on the paper, "Living the Future," which was presented at the Nazarene Global Theology Conference in South Africa in 2014.

see "MISSION" • page 6

MISSION: Book is appropriate for small groups, Sunday school

Continued from page 3

"People really engaged, they were encouraged, cried together, talked with each other, even during lunch, and shared in groups on how we need to be intentional about being the Church of God in the here and now," Pereira said.

The 44 copies of *Recuperando a Missão Completa de Deus* were not enough to meet demand, so more copies will be printed for the Portugal District Assembly in November.

"This is a clear sign of how much people need meaningful and helpful resources in their language for themselves, and to serve others," said Nikolaj Sawatzky, Eurasia Region Literature Coordinator. "I am

very grateful to Raquel Pereira and her team for their tireless efforts in making this book available for our Portuguese-speaking brothers and sisters around the world."

Flemming is professor of New Testament and Missions at MidAmerica Nazarene University, in Kansas, USA. Previously, he served as a Nazarene missionary, teaching for many years at European Nazarene College, based in Germany, as well as Asia-Pacific Nazarene Theological Seminary, in the Philippines. He has published four other books, including *Why Mission?* and *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns for Theology and Mission*. □



Recovering the Full Mission of God is available in English on Amazon: <http://tiny.cc/td1btv>.

Recuperando a Missão Completa de Deus is available on Amazon at <http://tiny.cc/9f1btv>.

Training sparks new youth group in Romania

By Alexandra Marinescu

Nexūs was a wonderful and unique experience. It was the main reason why I understood the importance of the youth group, so, after the course; I started a youth group in Romania.

Not only Nexūs helped me make this decision, but it taught me to appreciate and give more importance to young people. I have learned that they also have problems and they face difficult situations, despite being young. I have learned that they need someone to be there for them to encourage them, to tell them: Don't worry. Jesus is in control of your situation!

We live in a tumultuous and hurried world and I know that today's youngsters are running for the values of this world and not the values of God. That is why they need guidance. I was not convinced, however, that I, a still-growing Christian, may be a youth leader

and can lead these children to God.

But God spoke to me first through a youth leader at Nexūs. Then, when I was on my way back to Romania, God spoke to my heart in such an overwhelming way that my only reaction was to cry for two hours continuously and to write down what God was telling me.

After experiencing God's presence, and in light of the course I attended, suddenly my life made sense. I do not mean to say I suddenly became the best youth leader, but my life made sense in that I discovered myself.

Questions such as: How can God put someone like me at the head of the youth group? Am I worthy to serve this important ministry? How does God speak to us? How can I make a spiritual awakening and stay awake?

The Lord spoke to me, and oooh...how my heart was listening to His answers! There would be a lot to write about my confession, but in short, God told me that by His will He is preparing me to

serve.

So, I have returned to Romania, full of the Holy Spirit like I have never been before, and I proposed to my church to have a special room for our young people. I found some donations and bought everything they needed. I wanted young people to feel like they're coming to their second home, so we decorated the room until it felt like a comfortable living room. The young people liked it! They said they feel comfortable and happy.

We started the youth group for a month. I asked God to send 40 young people to the youth group. I now have seven; 33 more to go! I trust the 33 are on their way. I love those kids who come to youth meetings. I don't know how, but I also love the other 33 I haven't met yet! I look forward to see them on Friday evenings, to eat together and discuss social issues and how God sees them.

God was the one who really put my desire in my heart. □

Who are Nazarenes?

We are a Christian people

As members of the Church Universal, we join with all true believers in proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ and in affirming the historic Trinitarian creeds and beliefs of the Christian faith. We value our Wesleyan-Holiness heritage and believe it to be a way of understanding the faith that is true to Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience.

We are a holiness people

God, who is holy, calls us to a life of holiness. We believe that the Holy Spirit seeks to do in us a second work of grace, called by various terms including "entire sanctification" and "baptism with the Holy Spirit"-cleansing us from all sin, renewing us in the image of God, empowering us to love God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, and producing in us the character of Christ. Holiness in the life of believers is most clearly understood as Christlikeness.

We are a missional people

We are a sent people, responding to the call of Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to go into all the world, witnessing to the Lordship of Christ and participating with God in the building of the Church and the extension of His kingdom (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Corinthians 6:1). Our mission (a) begins in worship, (b) ministers to the world in evangelism and compassion, (c) encourages believers toward Christian maturity through discipleship, and (d) prepares women and men for Christian service through Christian higher education.

Learn more at: www.nazarene.org/articles-faith

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

—Colossians 4:6

Prayer requests

Please pray for Diego Lopez, Eurasia Region youth leader, and his regional leadership team, as they help to bring youth leadership training to more youth leaders across the Eurasia Region. Ask God to open doors and hearts, and for the Holy Spirit to anoint leaders and youth to prepare a new generation for loving God with all their hearts, minds, souls and strength.

Pray for the Yerevan Nazarenes as they utilize their new building for more effective outreach ministry to their community. Ask God to bless them, as well as the Berlin church, which is also looking for increased space and greater influence in its local community.

Pray for the new youth group in Romania, that God blesses and increases it.

Where Worlds Meet

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