

WHERE WORLDS MEET

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CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
EURASIA

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Open door to Serbia opens a little wider

Country is one of 10 that regional leaders planned to enter in 10 years

By Gina Grate Pottenger

It's as simple as an open door.

That is what the Church of the Nazarene has found in Serbia.

Since February 2016, the Church of the Nazarene has had a presence in Serbia, primarily through Nazarene teams supporting the government and nonprofit groups in serving refugees who have fled to Serbia from violence or persecution in places like Syria.

This refugee ministry provided the initial open door long dreamed of by Central Europe Field Strategy Coordinator Jay Sunberg and other Eurasia Region leadership. Serbia is one of 10 countries on the Eurasia Region that regional leadership set a 10-year goal to enter by 2021.

Thanks to the solid reputation the teams have established with their partners in Serbia, a traditionally Orthodox Christian nation, the door is opening a little wider.

"An opportunity has opened up for us because the church has done refugee ministry in a different way than other refugee organizations have done it," Sunberg said.

That witness has laid the foundation for a partnership with Serbian evangelical Christians, who have agreed to help pave the way with the government for

Nazarene workers to move to the country.

In early 2020, the first Nazarene workers will move to the capital city of Belgrade for a four-year assignment to establish compassionate ministry in the country, according to Sunberg. In addition to continuing refugee ministry, the plan is for them to join local Christian partners who are already well-established in ministry to the Roma people, a stateless ethnic group scattered across Europe, often living in poverty and marginalized in their majority societies.

A Nazarene church in Oregon has expressed a desire to partner in opening the work, including through sending short-term mission teams to bolster the worker family's work, Sunberg added.

Developing the presence of the Nazarene church in Serbia, as part of the Central Europe Field, will require sensitivity, wisdom and discernment, in part due to Serbia's history of ethnic and religious conflict with its former Yugoslavian neighbors, including Albania, Kosova and



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Volunteering

A fresh coat of paint and a bit of hope

Volunteers show God's love to refugees in Serbia

By Kaitlyn Williams

Editor's note: The Church of the Nazarene has been present in Serbia since 2016 when refugees flooded into the country from Syria and other areas torn apart by violence and war. Within the Central Europe Field, Serbia's overrun refugee camps from the first welcomed Nazarene volunteers to assist in refugee support.

A summer volunteer, Kaitlyn Williams, writes about the deep and positive impact the simple acts of painting and cleaning the refugee camp's living spaces has had on the people who have been waiting -- and losing hope -- for a new life and a new home.

A clean and clutter-free home is sometimes an indicator of hope.

This summer, my job at the refugee camp in Belgrade, Serbia, was to paint and clean rooms, halls, doors. It may not seem like much, but to the refugees here it means a fresh look for their temporary home. More importantly, it means someone noticed and cared about their situation, and did something to make it better.

Five hundred to 600 people live in this camp, but there is turnover. Each day, about 20 leave and 20

arrive. The living conditions are not nice, but people have a place to sleep and food to eat. Our team goes in to help clean and improve the residents' spaces.

We painted the small, shared room of four teenage boys (ages 14-18) who came to Serbia alone. Unfamiliar with keeping house, and unaccompanied by a caring parent, their room became smelly, dirty, messy and dark. Exactly what one might expect when four boys share a tiny space, apart from positive familial and community

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SERBIA: New workers plan 4-year assignment

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Croatia, where the Church of the Nazarene is flourishing. Nazarenes across the region were personally affected by the war in the 1990s that led to Yugoslavia's break up into today's ethnically divided nations.

There have been steps forward. Nazarenes from Kosova have traveled to Serbia to assist in the refugee ministry, for instance (read the story: <https://www.>

[eurasiaregion.org/kosovar-nazarenes-remember-their-past-as-they-visit-refugees/](https://www.eurasiaregion.org/kosovar-nazarenes-remember-their-past-as-they-visit-refugees/)). And one local church has prayed for God to allow the Nazarene church to be planted in Serbia.

"As the church we can't push people [toward reconciliation], but we want to say we need to be different," Sunberg said. "We may want to push them beyond their pain, but that's

not our right to do, either. We do want to be a witness of people to Christ, and reconciliation is part of what we are and what we do, but that's difficult. What an opportunity for the church to lead the way for reconciliation and forgiveness. But not an easy opportunity." □

HOPE: Brightening a room can brighten a life

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relationships. These boys have no guidance, no encouragement, and to be frank, they are unfortunate enough to embody a stereotype of the kind of people who are dangerous because they are dark-skinned; that they are predatory because they are single and male; and that they are stronger and more capable of doing bad things because they are young.

So, the young men are kept in separate barracks away from the rest of camp – away from the potentially positive influence of parental figures and the rest of the community.

They are left to do one of two things: Try to leave Serbia for a Western European country where they have family members, or wait.

Both are hopeless options.

Traveling further into Europe is dangerous. Many who make the attempt return to the camp with injuries, even animal bites. Some say border officers beat them when they were caught.

Serbia invites a small number of asylum seekers each year to become permanent residents. That means once a refugee ends up in

a Serbian camp, they are probably going to be there indefinitely. Some refugees I work with have been in this camp since it opened five years ago. Some have held refugee status for decades.

The second option, waiting, means the refugees are waiting for nothing. They cannot travel further, they cannot legally work in Serbia, and almost none will be allowed to settle in Serbia. So, fear, hopelessness and anxiety set in.

Without the sense of purpose that comes with going to school or work, and without the ability to earn money, these refugees, especially the teenage boys and young men spend much of each day drifting aimlessly around camp. Anger and chronic depression plague them.

At first meeting, the young men are hesitant, reluctant to trust us. But when we engage in conversation, they laugh and smile, responding to people who take an interest not only in the beautification of where they sleep at night, but in them as fellow human beings. Somehow, this inspires them to clean, and actually help with painting their rooms and the barracks hall.

After my team and I return to one of these newly painted barracks several weeks later, the rooms are usually still clean. These guys don't need people to do it all for them, they just need someone to demonstrate through words and actions, "We care about you," and they need encouragement not to completely give up. As we paint and clean together, they realize that the simple act of brightening up the barrack brings brightness into their lives, and hope, as well.

During my summer of ministering in Serbia, I've learned that people simply need to be shown love, and even painting their dwelling space can do that. Whether it's a lighthearted joke to the disgruntled 16-year-old or a simple smile to the exhausted mother, investing in people's lives makes all the difference. In a world where refugees are marginalized and forgotten, we need to work harder and be better at showing them that they are valued and they are loved. Maybe then we can work to find them a place that really can be home. □

EVANGELISM DISCIPLESHIP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Nazarene Youth International's three core values are evangelism (BE), discipleship (DO), and leadership development (GO). We have resources to help youth and youth leaders navigate life and ministry in the context of these principles. Visit the websites below to download all of our free resources, including spoken word videos and scripts, discussion guides, graphics, and our three-book series, BE DO GO. English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French versions are available!



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Theological education

EuNC plans 10-year strategy to ‘grow together’

By Nicole Almeida

Ten years.

That is the timeframe European Nazarene College has given to a long-term vision and strategic plan for “growing together” in the spiritual formation of its students, and as a college providing theological education to Nazarenes living in highly secularized, postmodern cultures that view themselves as “post-Christian.”

While some mistakenly view theological education as reserved for clergy, theological formation has never been more critical for the health and strength of the entire local church, said Rector Klaus Arnold.

“There are many questions being asked today to which Christians do not know how to respond,” said Arnold. “When we look at challenges like immigration, and even sexuality, how do we respond? In the past, all we needed to do was say this is right

or wrong, but it doesn’t work in the same way anymore. We need to know how to approach people who think differently. This comes with theological education.”

The executive committee of the board, together with the EuNC leadership, is laying out a 10-year vision plan, from 2020 to 2030, with the objective of growing together as a school alongside local churches; growing together spiritually through the transformational aspect of education; and growing together in numbers.

“This growth pushes faculty, students, and local leaders to work together year by year to help us be a little better than before.”

To reach their 10-year objectives, the college will focus on developing five areas:

- Increasing enrollment at the college’s 17 learning centers in 17 countries, which currently serve 200 students, and gaining more qualified teachers and resources
- Strengthening the infrastructure – continuing to develop the current learning centers and creating new learning centers.
- Increasing stability in governance

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EuNC: Growth includes beyond Eurasia

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- involvement and engagement of the districts in the board.
- Ensuring the programs are accredited and validated, so that students will be able to fulfill ordination requirements, but also so that those who may want to continue their studies in other areas will be able to.
- Enhancing EuNC's network with other schools and ministry partners.

As the Church of the Nazarene continues pushing new frontiers and entering new countries – in Eurasia it has entered seven new countries in the past 10 years -- EuNC is positioning itself to expand theological education to those whom God is calling by offering education contextualized for their cultural backgrounds and specific needs.

“When we think about opening a learning center, we think on the ways that we, as a school, can help the church in that context,” Arnold said. “When we open new learning centers, we want to do it in coherence with the field and district. As a school we want to support the field and district, and be part of its growth.”

But this growth has the potential to extend beyond the borders of the Eurasia Region. For instance, because EuNC serves France, it may also be able to support theological education in other French-speaking countries around the world.

To reach these goals, EuNC must overcome some challenges. One of the most significant is finding quality resources within the Wesleyan-Arminian holiness tradition in languages other than English.

“As the Church grows and we look to grow with the church, we need

to have the resources to teach,” Arnold said. “Another challenge we have been overcoming little by little is to have a strong student community. This is something that was simpler when the students were on a campus, but we want to keep it strong.”

Rather than continue to uproot people from their jobs, culture and ministry to study full-time at EuNC, in 2012 the college closed its residential campus in Germany so as to put all its resources and focus on better serving and expand its education to students where they live and minister.

The next 10 years won't be possible without the help and support of the district superintendents and the local churches where EuNC learning centers operate, or where they could be opened.

“Together we have the mission to preach Christ,” he said. □

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WELCOME TO THE

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Pray for the Eurasia Regional Conference

Download and share prayer requests for the conferences
in Cyprus, November 2019, and India, January 2020:

www.facebook.com/invisible.conference/

We pray for ourselves, and our brothers and sisters, that even though we might feel small and insignificant, we may understand that God is calling us to be salt and light of the earth! May we receive insight and wisdom to know how to let our light shine.

Lord Jesus, we pray that we would remember your promise: You will never leave your children as orphans, nor forsake your disciples! May your presence and words, through your Holy Spirit, be with us every day.

Father, we ask to understand that Jesus and his disciples could not register with the government as a church, either, and that we will be bold to follow Jesus and his ways in spite of what the world says, not bending the truth or becoming like the world.

Jesus, we ask for your true church to arise in the midst of difficult times; that we will not be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Praying and fasting
for a fresh outpouring
of the Spirit of Holiness.

"Your face, O Lord, do I seek"
Psalm 27:8

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

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."
-- 1 Peter 5:6

Prayer requests

Please pray for the Regional Conferences, taking place in Cyprus (November) and India (January). Ask the Holy Spirit to move in our church through the participants.

Pray for the leaders, volunteers and future missionaries involved in opportunities to advance the church in Serbia. Ask God to give wisdom, discernment, and to reveal open doors, leading to those whom God wants to work in and through.

Pray for the refugees in Serbia awaiting their future, but experiencing obstacles, depression and loss of hope. Ask God to make Himself known to them, bringing them into relationship with Him during this time.

Pray for the leaders, teachers and students of European Nazarene College, as they execute their 10-year plan to grow in enrollment, educators, quality and influence. Ask for God to remove obstacles, and lead and guide them forward.

Where Worlds Meet

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