

WHERE WORLDS MEET

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Steps forward in Latvia

Nonprofit organization registered with government, and more

By Gina Grate Pottenger

As Aleksei Shipovalov and Olga Druzhinina enter their second year as pioneer missionaries in Riga, Latvia, they have made several important steps forward in establishing the presence of the Nazarene church there.

In the fall, they successfully registered a nonprofit ministry with the Latvian government.

"It was like a miracle. We are an organization now!" said Druzhinina.

Called *Nācāretes žēlsirdības kalpošana*, ("Nazarene Compassion Ministry"), the new non-government organization (NGO) will primarily exist to support already existing, but under-supported, organizations or government ministries in Latvia.

"We talked with a lot of people in Latvia before we did this registration. We asked, 'What is needed in the society?' And mainly there're a lot of families in crisis. There is a lot of poverty; it is really shocking. We didn't know about that when we came," Druzhinina explained.

On the outskirts of Riga, the capital city, families still burn wood, coal and even just scraps of paper to heat their homes or apartments. Some families are without electricity, or don't have kitchen space to cook meals in their homes. Many are living in outdated apartment buildings that are scheduled to be torn down and rebuilt, but that hasn't happened yet.

Following Latvia's separation from the former Soviet Union in 1991, human trafficking, drug trafficking and money laundering plagued the country. When Latvia joined the European Union, it allowed Latvians – mostly working age young adults – to emigrate to other European countries where they could work higher paying jobs and send some of their income home to their families. This split up many families, as young parents left their children to be raised by their grandparents.

"The children feel like orphans. It's not good to stay with the grandparents," she said.

The government has made strides toward eliminating or minimizing some of these problems, including establishing or expanding a variety of social services. There are also some private organizations that are providing needed social services, sometimes in partnership with government ministries.

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LATVIA: Office space, bank account secured

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These are the groups that the new NCM organization will come alongside to support.

“These are experienced people who already know how to deal with the families and children,” Druzhinina said. “We will learn from them what is the best to do, and we will provide some help for them.”

Some of the groups are run by believers, and so Shipovalov and Druzhinina hope that these partnerships will allow them to share about God’s love with children and families, and organize a Sunday school and Bible study that is open to the kids and families with whom they make contact.

However, the Latvian mentality is to meet in neutral, public spaces, like cafes, parks and restaurants.

“People do not want to come to the Bible study to a personal apartment. We believe that more people would come if we invite them to a neutral territory,” Druzhinina said. “We



Photo by Olga Druzhinina

The new Nazarene Compassionate Ministry, called *Nācaretes žēlsirdības kalpošana*, has a new office space in Riga, Latvia’s capital city.

started looking for an office, which we can use for different purposes: 1. The Bible study for ladies from the International Women’s Club of Riga; 2. The Bible study for our leaders and friends; 3. Meetings related to our NGO. We want to find a place, where 10 to 15 people can meet at the same time.”

The couple found an office that would suit their purposes within a government building. In mid-December they signed a contract to rent the space at an acceptable price. The bank also granted an account for the NGO.

Other developments:

- The Nazarene Articles of Faith have been translated and published into Latvian. https://whdl.org/ticibas-paragrafi?fbclid=IwAR2e2I94aYH72cKFTkXOocYIfJLPGII6PLtkCX8ekvY_loq9BjrEXINiQrE

- Druzhinina was asked to be a main speaker at the Salvation Army Region Day, 19 November, a gathering of

Theological Essay

Olga Druzhinina recently published an article in the denomination’s magazine, *Holiness Today*, called “Your Kingdom Come.”

Read the article here: <https://tinyurl.com/uulhvky>

Previous story on Latvia

Read the first article about the pioneering of the Nazarene work in Latvia:

<https://www.eurasiaregion.org/called-from-russia-to-latvia/>

Salvation Army officers. She taught about holiness, as the main topic was, “Holiness for Today: Practical Approach”.

- The couple are working closely with the Salvation Army in Riga, and have been invited to preach every week at their social center; Shipovalov leads their weekly Thursday Bible study. □



The new office space with a fresh coat of paint, ready for a Bible study.



Youth leadership

The Church as God's hand

Nazarenes in Lebanon took action to support those battling raging mountain wildfires

By Nabil Habiby

In October, hundreds of fires erupted in the Lebanese mountains. Thousands of people had to leave their homes, at least one volunteer firefighter died, homes were burned to the ground, and forests were destroyed.

A local Christian priest of one of the affected villages in the mountains described the nights of Monday and Tuesday as "hell." By Tuesday noon, things were getting out of hand. Lebanon called neighboring countries for help. The fires did not seem to be abating.

I am part of my district WhatsApp group (made up of four Nazarene churches in Lebanon) for leaders and pastors. On Tuesday noon, as the fires continued to rage, people on the group agreed, "Let us pray for rain."

It just happened that I was writing a theology college course on the Kingdom of God in the New Testament. Kingdom is God in action. Kingdom is the church – God's hand – in action. So I wrote back: "Besides praying, is there more we can do to help in some way? Perhaps send volunteers to put out the fires? Send food for the firefighters? Do something?"

Our district superintendent (DS) Rev. Andrew, who has a great heart for ministry and caring for the poor, replied: "We know how to help refugees, but what can we do with a fire?"

He was right! We have zero experience in fighting fires. We have countless years of experience (thanks to the many wars we have witnessed) in serving refugees. Is it the church's role to fight fires? Are we to intervene in every social or environmental crisis around us? When do we say, "This is our job," and when do we say, "Sorry, we can't do anything about this"?

We agreed to form an emergency committee: Me, two other youth, and

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ACT: Rain, sun, church's love -- all from God

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Rev. Andrew. One of us knew how to contact the people on the ground fighting, who told us that the greatest need was for food. Hundreds of volunteers had been fighting the fire for over 24 hours with little food and water.

We can help with food and water! Our church has a restaurant that cooks and serves food for the poor (read the former article about the restaurant ministry: <https://tinyurl.com/yzb86nnk>). A local Baptist church offered to help fund the meals. Nazarene Compassionate Ministries said they can help us purchase ingredients and food, too. Our cooks started cooking.

On that same evening, barely six hours after the call for prayer had been issued, two church vans full of seven youth, Rev. Andrew, and 100 hot meals headed into the Chouf Mountains to deliver dinner to the firefighters and volunteers. As they made their way into the burned and burning mountains, rain began to fall.

The next day religious (Muslims and Christians) and non-religious people were deep in discussions on social media, in their workplaces and homes: was the falling rain a miracle from God, or was it a natural event?

A young friend of mine stopped me Wednesday morning: "Help! My friends are arguing over WhatsApp! A believer is vehemently stating that it was God who sent the rain. My other friends are replying that rain is natural. God had nothing to do with this."

I gave the usual lecture about believing that God operates in all things. Miracles are from God, but so are natural events and all the good things in this world. Over in the church WhatsApp group and among my Christian friends, there was much festivity in thanking God for the rain.

Did God send the rain?

Surprisingly, I found the second question harder than the first. It was easy for me, almost natural, to argue that the church should move into action to help in a time of need. Even if we don't know how to put out fires, we must help! We can't stay put! It was harder for me to make sense of the rain, whether it was an answered prayer, and religious people boasting in 2019 that their God had sent the rain to put out the fire.

Perhaps it is an issue of language. Let me start with the tangible event: the church sending food to the firefighters. Was that the work of God? Obviously, yes. God had moved his church. Now to the second event: the rain, a natural occurrence in mid-October in Lebanon, falling to quench the fire at the time of greatest despair. Was that the work of God? Not obviously, but from a theological and pious viewpoint, yes. A resounding "yes."

Perhaps in more Kingdom language, the church moving to help the volunteers was an act of imitation of what God has always been doing, taking care of His world. Rain, shine, and all aspects of life in this world are God shouting out His Lordship and care over the earth.

The church sending two vans with 100 meals is the church resembling her God, shouting out His Lordship and care over all the earth. What a blessing that the two events happened at the same time.



What would our world look like without God's grace? If such a world can exist, then surely the priest's description of the October fires works here: hell. What would our world look like with God's grace in action? God answers through the rain and when the Church responds to His call to embody His love and justice in everyday actions." □

-- Nabil Habiby is dean of students at the Nazarene Evangelical School in Sin el Fil, and is currently studying for his PhD in New Testament studies at Nazarene Theological College-Manchester. He lectures in New Testament studies at a local seminary in Beirut.

South Asian and Indian youth leaders collaborate on magazine

Leaders highlight youth leadership in compassionate ministries

Two years ago, while in a council meeting with Nazarene youth leaders from South Asia, Eurasia youth leader Diego Lopez was amazed at all the compassionate service projects the youth had organized and/or were leading.

"It became my vision that we work to write a very good quality magazine that showcased the great work they were doing," he said.

Lopez shared the idea with his youth leaders in South Asia and India. With unanimous excitement, and commitment to the project, the group worked together against very short deadlines from September to November 2019 to interview Nazarene youth, write and edit articles, and collect photos for the magazine.

In November, the 40+ page edition of "Love, Care, Serve" went to print and debuted at the Eurasia Regional Conference in Cyprus, 14 November 2019. It will next be distributed at the regional conference in Hyderabad, India, 25 January 2020.

Writers participated from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

"In record time we put this magazine together with the help of excellent professionals--designers, writers, photographers, as well as with the collaboration of Nazarene Compassionate Ministries International, and the Eurasia Region communications team."

The magazine features stories about local Nazarene youth groups developing classes to empower women in their societies; to help communities fight an outbreak



of dengue fever; to bring clean water wells to remote villages; to lead local child development centers for underprivileged children; and much more.

Magazine contributor and youth leader Oshan*, from Sri Lanka, had previously had an idea to create a magazine for Nazarene youth in Bangladesh, so he was excited and ready to help when Lopez proposed organizing an international team to write a magazine about compassionate youth leadership across India and South Asia.

"It's a good opportunity to share our NYI thoughts and stories to our global church," Oshan said. "Working as a team, it's very important. Then we can share our ideas and get others' ideas."

"The heart of this magazine is to showcase powerful stories of youth doing compassion in South Asia and India," Lopez said. "We hope youth around the world see themselves identified in the magazine and are able to connect in compassion." □

**Full name omitted for security*

WELCOME TO THE

INVISIBLE

— WORLD —

Pray for the Eurasia Regional Conference

Download and share prayer requests for the conference in
Hyderabad, India, 25-29 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

"Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced." – 1 Chronicles 16:11-12

Prayer requests

Please pray for the Regional Conference in Hyderabad, India, 25-29 January 2020. Ask the Holy Spirit to move in our church through the participants. Pray for strength and wisdom in those planning the conference.

Pray for Alexei Shipovalov and Olga Druzhinina as they advance the presence of the Nazarene church in Latvia. Ask God to bless them with favor, receptive contacts and growing relationships.

Pray for the Church of the Nazarene in Lebanon as they search for ways to love their communities with God's love, that God will open doors and hearts, leading them into what He is doing through the discernment of the Holy Spirit.

Pray for youth across India and South Asia, that God would anoint them with wisdom, maturity, compassion and love for their communities and nations, as well as creativity and resources to serve people and meet the felt needs around them.

Where Worlds Meet

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