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A nurse's story: God's peace in a time of fear

Working in a hospital in Italy, Vania Fink testifies to God's powerful presence and faithfulness.

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Dreams come true: A pastor's story in the Middle East

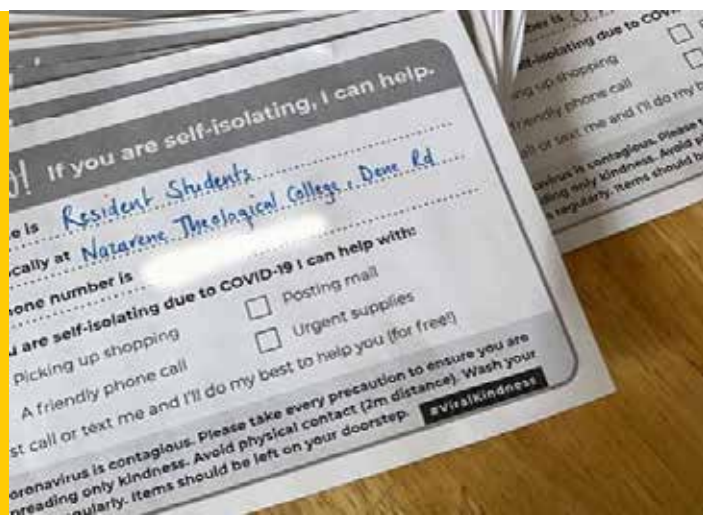
A series of visions and dreams guide a pastor into ministry and leadership of a Nazarene church.



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NTC students serve neighbors during pandemic

Residents around college respond to flyers with requests for help.



Vania Fink is a nurse in a Florence, Italy, hospital, and is a member of the Church of the Nazarene.



Photo submitted by Vania Fink

Testimony

A nurse's story: God's peace in a time of fear

By Vania Fink

*For I hear many whispering,
"Terror on every side!" But I
trust in you, Lord; I say, "You
are my God."*

Psalm 31:13-14

Since 1992, when I started working in the hospital, first as a student and then as a nurse, I knew that times like the ones we are going through could come.

Each shift, we are in direct contact with many types of bacteria and viruses, but nothing has thrown us into confusion like this Sars-Cov2.

Fear. A word that in all these years of nursing career I have never experienced. Fear around me. Fear not for myself, but for my family who has not chosen this profession. Fear for my elderly and distant parents. Fear in people's eyes. Fear when people treat you like the one who is carrying the virus around. Fear in the eyes of colleagues. Fear

in doctors who, usually, do not wear masks and always behave boldly in front of any isolation we put in place, but who, suddenly, are in a frantic search for masks and use of hand sanitizer gel. Fear, because we don't have the right PPE (personal protective equipment).

Terrible statistics: infections, deaths, coffins, insufficient beds in intensive care, insufficient ventilators, quarantine. Applause from the balconies ... suddenly we are the heroes of the situation. Wash your hands to the limit. The skin that breaks from too much use of hand sanitizer. Is your throat burning from coronavirus or the many disinfectants we breathe? Computers, telephones, electromedical devices disinfected so often and with so much care.

Fear of approaching patients. Learn to touch them with gloves (preferably double). Smile from behind a mask, hoping they can see that smile in your eyes. The days of comforting through a hug are over. Social distancing! How many things have changed.

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PEACE: 'I have never experienced such calm'

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And this unexpected change, difficult to manage, throws everyone into confusion.

In the midst of this chaos, suddenly, there is fear that leaves room to a deep peace. Those who know me professionally know how much I can manage to remain calm, even in the most tragic situations, but I have never experienced such calm—a peace that goes beyond any reasonable explanation and understanding. Not because I know the enemy and I know how to fight it or how to protect myself, but because I know so well my God, who has promised to be with me

wherever I go, who has promised He will never leave me and will never abandon me.

My prayer since the beginning of this pandemic has been the one of Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." God has answered: "I leave you peace; I give you my peace. Do not let your heart be troubled or dismayed." (John 14:27)

How will it end? Nobody knows. But one thing I know for sure, that God is and will be with me in any circumstance, in any situations, in any moment of my life. ♦

-- Vania Fink is a member of the Church of the Nazarene in Florence, Italy.



Testimony

Dreams come true: A pastor's story in the Middle East

By Gina Pottenger

*No matter how many times *Caleb tried to leave the Kurdish community in the Middle East where he grew up, he always found himself back there. Now he understands that God has a plan for him and his community.*

Raised Catholic, Caleb's childhood was marked with a deep love for Jesus. But as he grew older, he lost interest in matters of faith. He had a happy family life and did not sense a personal need for God.

"We are from a middle class family," he said. "My dad is not an educated person and I'm really proud of him.

My mom is also not graduated. I love my family and my mom and dad. I used to feel this big joy with them."

But in 1998, he experienced the first "shock" of his life: His mother became seriously ill. She suffered for three years, and then passed away in 2001. Caleb was devastated.

"Life at that time completely changed," he said. "I wasn't interested in anything at all in my life. My friends who used to know me before my mom passed away said, 'You changed a lot after this incident, as if you are living your normal life, but carrying a big burden.' During these years my relationship with God was blocked."

When his father remarried, Caleb moved to a community two hours away for work, and stayed there two years, until an opportunity arose that he'd been waiting for.

"I had one purpose: to buy the



Photo by Kristina Paukshite from Pexels

company that I used to work for. I wanted to buy it. That was my future goal. I wasn't really interested in anything else at all."

When he learned that business came up for sale, he returned home to buy it.

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DREAMS: Jesus appeared to him in a bright light

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A mysterious encounter

One day, when it was time for lunch, rather than joining his coworkers to eat, he slipped into his office and closed the door. He felt very tired, so he watched TV for a little while, thinking he might take a nap. Then he realized there was someone sitting in the other chair, and that person asked him a strange question:

“What are you going to do?”

Caleb remembers answering without thinking, “My friends went to lunch and now I’m relaxing and watching TV.”

The person then said, “Now, go visit the Bible society and ask the person in the bookshop to give you a Bible. But you will not take the Bible at first. When you do take the Bible, read it.”

The stranger then got up and left.

“I was really surprised,” Caleb recalls. “Who is this person and where has he gone?”

Caleb went out to the main gate of the property to see where the man went, but the gate was locked.

“How did he enter this place when the door is completely locked?” he asked himself.

“Inside myself I thought it was an angel who appeared to me and told me to do this. Until now, I don’t remember his appearance or shape,” Caleb said.

Caleb went into town to the Christian bookshop and told the store owner about what had just happened. The man reached behind the counter to get a Bible and offered it to Caleb. Caleb said, “I have a Bible at home, so I don’t want to take this Bible from you.”

The owner said, “But that man told you that you have to take it. Even if you don’t want it, just take it and give it to someone else.”

Caleb found himself accepting the Bible after having first refused it, just as the stranger had predicted. He returned to his office and started to read.

“And my journey with God started from that time,” he recalls. “There was a complete change in my life from that time. I was reading the Word of God and applying it to my life and examining my life. So, the Word of God says not to use the name of God in vain, but I used

“How did he enter this place when the door is completely locked?”

*-- *Caleb, pastor in the Middle East*

to do that. The Word of God says do not do bad things or curse, but I used to do these things also. At that time I used to smoke and drink alcohol. When I read the Bible, I said, ‘Enough is enough. Thank you, Jesus. Because of this, it’s now time to change.’”

Dreams and visions

In 2005, Caleb decided to leave his home region, hoping to emigrate to Australia where an uncle lived. Caleb traveled to Istanbul to submit his application through the United Nations, while praying for God to guide him and give him wisdom about where he should resettle, even if it was somewhere in Africa.

While he waited for his case to be approved, one night he had a

dream that Jesus appeared to him in a bright light, so bright he was forced to turn away. He heard the instruction that he was to return to his home community within three months and serve God there.

On another night he dreamed that he was waiting for a bus to take him to Australia, but when he climbed on the waiting bus, it dropped him off in his hometown. He scolded the driver for not taking him to Australia, but the driver responded, “We need you here.”

As Caleb walked away from where the driver had left him, he saw an elderly man, who asked him where he was going. Caleb answered that he was going to Australia. The elderly man said, “We need you here,” and gave him a key from his pocket.

“Because many doors will be closed in front of you, no one will be able to open these doors except you,” the man said, before disappearing.

Caleb awoke from the dream and, three months exactly from the date he’d applied to go to Australia, his case was denied. So he returned to his hometown, just as his dream had predicted.

He went back to work for two years, but the lingering question from his dream remained: Is there a real place in my region where the driver dropped me off in my dream?

Finding a mentor

In 2007, a friend wrote to tell him that a pastor from another city was coming to his community for a visit and wanted to meet Caleb. When the pastor came with his family, they all had a meal together. During prayer, Caleb sensed the Holy Spirit telling him that this pastor was sent to help him begin ministry.

The pastor was a Nazarene; he

see “KEY” • page 5

KEY: Years later, church opens where he dreamed

Continued from page 4

mentored Caleb in the doctrine of the Nazarene church, and what it means to be a minister.

“God gave us many blessings,” Caleb says. “We had many obstacles we passed through, difficult times together.”

In 2008, God blessed Caleb with a wife and, soon after, a son. Raising a child gave him new insights into the fatherhood of God, and God’s love for him.

“I used to see this whole image of how God was really feeling when He saw Jesus crucified on the cross. When I was reminded of this picture, I used to stick more to my faith and the church.”

When Caleb and the Nazarene pastor organized a church, it turned out to be at the physical location where Caleb dreamed that the bus driver had dropped him off. But he still wondered what the key from his dream symbolized.

In 2015, the pastor and his family prepared to leave the community,

other local churches and closed the doors of the church.”

However, Caleb agreed to continue leading the five families who made up the former church in a Bible study while he made plans to immigrate with his family out of the region. He and his wife prayed and fasted for God’s guidance on where to move, including Australia. Yet, every time they began to take serious steps to emigrate, his wife became anxious and uneasy. They sensed that the lack of peace was a sign from God that they should stay.

Dreams fulfilled

In 2016, Caleb contacted the leader of the Nazarene church in the Middle East. The leader asked what support he might need. With

his help, the congregation was able to buy the same house where they used to gather for worship.

They held a celebration and invited the other churches in the city to join

them for an official reopening of the church. As Caleb spoke to the gathering, sharing his testimony, he remembered the key he’d been given in his dream, and sensed God explaining that the key was given to him to reopen the church.



As a district licensed minister, Caleb has served as lead pastor for the Nazarene church he helped to plant, and which is one of only two Nazarene churches in the region. That year they began compassionate ministry and outreach to refugees and other neighbors in need.

In 2017, Caleb was elected to serve as director of the region’s Evangelical Alliance and, in 2018, they organized an advisory committee.

“I have a vision to open three other churches in five years, so that in every region we have one church. Our vision in 2020 is to have five ministry partners with me. Our aim is to disciple 50 families from the neighborhood. Our focus is for teaching and discipling these people.”

**Names and locations omitted for security reasons*

“I have a vision to open three other churches in five years, so that in every region we have one church.... Our focus is for teaching and discipling these people.”

-- Pastor Caleb

so he asked Caleb to take over the church’s leadership. However, Caleb was not prepared for this unexpected change.

“I lost confidence. I said, ‘I cannot do this.’ I refused to take the ministry. We distributed all the things to the



Youth leadership

NTC students serve neighbors affected by pandemic

By Nicole Almeida

When the government of the United Kingdom issued stay-at-home orders and social distancing guidelines to slow the spread of COVID-19, students at Nazarene Theological College (NTC) in Didsbury, Manchester, suddenly found themselves confined to campus residences and practicing social distancing. While following the government's orders, they wondered if there was something more they could do to serve their neighbors.

"This is quite an affluent neighborhood where there are many detached houses, but that usually means there is a large number of elderly people," said Michael Kane, Nazarene Theological College's chaplain. "Many of the conversations the students have had are with elderly people in their 70s and 80s. They are the most vulnerable to the pandemic, and many are scared to leave the house."

Debbie Kane, the campus warden, and a Hurlet Hall student started the discussion of what they could do for the neighbors.

"We started talking about being like Jesus: What does it mean to us during this time?" said student Finlay Mackinnon.

There are 24 students who remain on the NTC campus, with 12 of those in Hurlet Hall. The students were inspired by a flyer a church had created to advertise its help to neighbors. The students created their own version of the flyer, which said, "Hello. Are you self-isolating? We can help." It included a number where people could send text messages to request assistance. They posted about 200 flyers throughout the neighborhood.

"I was in Scotland when the students gave out the flyers and we started receiving messages right away," Debbie said. "Most of the messages were asking us to help get prescriptions or groceries. We also received many from people that can leave the house but are simply thanking us for what we are doing."

"Although some of the neighbors have family members they can call for help, they have also reached out to the college. One neighbor's family lives abroad, so the students have

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NTC: This is what we should do as we ask ourselves, 'What would Jesus have said?'

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become her main supports during this time," Michael explained.

As messages kept arriving, the students living in Hurler Hall created a group chat to organize their response. When Debbie receives a text from a neighbor, she forwards the message to the group and whoever is available will make the run. Sometimes it's to help with groceries; other times it's to pick up prescriptions, walk the dogs, or mow a lawn.

"When a request comes in, we have two students make the run. On one hand this is for safety purposes, because we are going to the houses of people we are still getting to know," Debbie said. "But on the other, we are handling other people's money, and this way there is some kind of accountability. We are taking all the necessary precautions. When we go to a person's house to leave what we've bought, we usually knock on the door, leave everything in front of the door and then we go away. Before getting to the house, we also text them to let them know we are arriving so they are expecting us."

Joe Boston is a student who lives at Hurler Hall. Running these errands has enabled him to get acquainted with those who live close to campus.

"There is a lady that lives around the corner from the college and she recently hurt her leg, so she needed someone to go pick up her prescriptions," Boston said. "Another student and I walked about 45 minutes to get to the place we needed to pick up the prescriptions. In the end, she was very grateful

"She knows that she can call us, and we can simply talk or go get anything she needs."

-- Joe Boston, NTC student

that we had done this for her, and she has now kept more contact with the college. She knows that she can call us, and we can simply talk or go get anything she needs."

For these NTC students, doing this for their community during this critical and uncertain time was the logical way to go.

"It feels natural. This is the time where we are in quarantine and we feel like this is what we should naturally do to respond to the

pandemic, as we ask ourselves, 'What would Jesus have said?'" Boston said.

The rhythm of campus life has changed. All courses are now online, and the daily coffee break is observed individually rather than together in the college's café.

The students know they need to follow precautions about distancing and regular hand washing, especially when leaving the campus to help their neighbors. But they feel blessed that they don't have to go through this on their own.

"We are privileged to be staying on campus," said Mackinnon. "Some have one or two people in the house or live by themselves. Here we are 12 people and, in a way, it doesn't feel that different from before, except that I can't go to class or leave campus."

"We also have a great closed campus that we can take advantage of," said Boston. "There is a great back lawn that we can use and, because we are a closed community, we can still use those spaces. We are in lockdown, but we are in a great place to be in lockdown." ♦

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

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”

1 Corinthians 1:25

Prayer requests

Please pray for Vania Fink, and health workers around the world who are risking their health and lives to care for people who may be ill with coronavirus. Pray for strength, endurance, wisdom, and a reliance on God for their joy and peace during a time of fear and uncertainty. Also pray for the health care workers who have lost jobs or are on furlough as hospitals and clinics suspend elective appointments to divert resources to fighting the virus.

Pray for Nazarenes across Eurasia to spread their joy and peace in Christ to those who are anxious or fearful. Pray that the Spirit would open the Church’s eyes to new opportunities to serve and love others in Jesus’ name. Ask God to bless the NTC students’ relationships and service to their neighbors.

Pray for Pastor Caleb* and the church in his region to be filled with the Spirit as they evangelize and disciple people, and meet their needs in Jesus’ name.

Where Worlds Meet

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