

# WHERE WORLDS MEET

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EURASIA

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**Pastor of a  
YouTube program  
helps Russian  
churches  
navigate online  
ministry**

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## ‘Renewing my strength day by day’

*Italian health care workers share testimonies of God's presence during pandemic.*

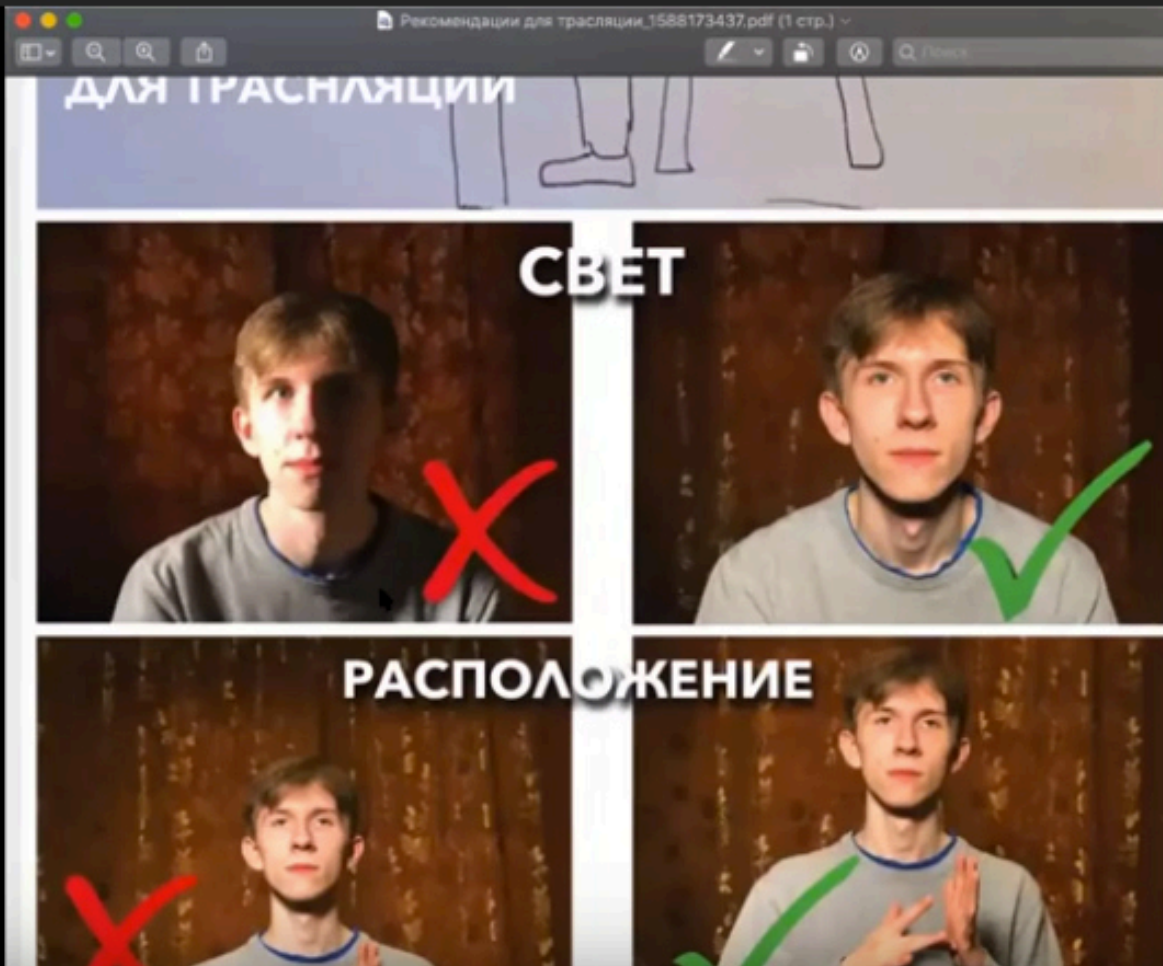
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**Nazarenes raise 8,000  
euro for Beirut school in  
jog-a-thon**

*More than a hundred people ran or walked in Germany, Spain, USA and Lebanon to support the school.*

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Local church

## Russian YouTube show opens more doors for online outreach

By Gina Grate Pottenger

*Founder of a Russian YouTube channel with an evangelistic focus, Pastor Yuri is seeing his vision for online outreach and worship embraced by thousands of pastors and churches as pandemic conditions drive them to digital “spaces.”*

In 2018, Yuri launched a travel and exploration-themed YouTube show in partnership with volunteers from a Finland-based Christian TV channel.

Each episode explores a topic in history, travel, culture or politics, and includes a segment

to study its spiritual components.

Yuri’s plan for the channel was to accumulate a minimum of 1,000 subscribers, and then gather those who were interested into small groups in their local communities for Bible study and worship.

As of May 2020, Afanastas.tv has 2,300 subscribers.

Late last year, Yuri moved into phase two of his plan: he and his team filmed and posted two pilot episodes of “Church Without Walls,” a YouTube series explicitly dedicated to exploring faith in an online community. The worship, Bible study and prayer time is filmed outside in a wooded area, which helps underscore that God’s people can meet anywhere, even in spaces without physical walls.

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Church Without Walls episodes (in Russian) are found at these links:

<https://youtu.be/dJyztbSVMpc>

<https://youtu.be/UxqAbyALyI0s>



# SHOW: Internet is ‘free space’ for believers

*Continued from page 2*

“Our plan was to start recording this program on a weekly basis this May, but the quarantine happened and borders closed,” Yuri said. The closures have prevented the film team from coming together to film the programs, and some lost their jobs, so they are on hiatus.

The global pandemic may have interrupted Pastor Yuri’s forward progress, but it’s proving the value of his innovative vision for Internet-based ministry, evangelism and discipleship. He believes in it more now than ever.

“You can build relationships, you can talk about God,” Yuri said. “If you remember, two years ago we talked about that. But now (with coronavirus), it’s like, ‘This is what we needed!’ I plan to find a new team in Volgograd and we will make the pilot program with them.”

With his YouTube channel paused, Yuri pivoted to offering his expertise to other pastors and churches that suddenly find themselves thrust unprepared into online spaces for ministry. He recently delivered a webinar to Russia North District pastors and church leaders on best practices for online worship services, discipleship and fellowship (webinar in Russian: <https://youtu.be/KXP4PxZLYsY>).

## **Greater religious freedom and participation online**

Yuri first thought of using YouTube to reach unchurched, Russian-speaking people because the Russian government had passed legislation that made it very difficult for Christians to legally share their faith with anyone outside registered church buildings, or even to invite someone to church. Yet, YouTube and the Internet remains a largely “free space.” Believers can invite anyone to attend meetings in Zoom or Skype or to watch a faith-based program online without restrictions.

As Nazarene churches in Russia adapt to digital meetings, for now, already they are attracting new people.

Recently, a church member invited an unchurched friend to join online Nazarene meetings. The woman has never attended any kind of church service before, including Russian Orthodox services.

“She is the first fruit of this vision,” Yuri said. “A lady invited her who knows her. She saw our Easter service program and she liked it. I hope that some time when the isolation is finished, we have the opportunity to meet her in reality.”

Five Nazarene churches in Russia cooperated to host a combined Internet-based Easter service attended by about 100 people on April 19.

One church is hosting small group Zoom meetings in which 10-15 people play games, spend time in discussion, and encourage one another through the separation and isolation of stay-at-home orders. It’s also an opportunity to share faith with those who don’t yet know God.

“The situation with the pandemic is a situation of stress,” Yuri said. “Everybody feels the stress. We talk about how we react in that situation, how God can help us with the stress. We need to change our emphasis from the Sunday services as the activity to which we invite our neighbors, and instead involve them in our online meetings and serve them. We need to think about how we can help them.”

## **A new landscape requiring new skills**

In his webinar, Yuri presented best practices for online worship, discipleship and outreach. The webinar explained why online services are an effective way to hold worship and reach the unreached, and provided technical knowledge to improve the visual and audio aesthetics.

For example, Yuri taught that among one of the critical differences between a traditional worship service inside a church and an online service is that the latter needs a digital host whose job is to run the technology and answer people’s questions so the pastor can focus on leading worship and preaching.

Additionally, churches need to think about those who have less access or comfort with digital technology.

“In our churches we have elderly people who could not participate in our online services because they do not have any kind of gadget,” he said. “They just have a cell phone without a screen. They can’t use Zoom, or Skype or YouTube.”

Young couples on the district have responded to these needs by voluntarily self-isolating for 14 days, and then visiting elderly members to distribute tablets for those who don’t have them, or helping them set up their devices so they can access the online church services and fellowship gatherings.

Yuri pointed out that this is a good time to involve young people in church ministry by inviting them to contribute their ease and expertise with the Internet and technology as part of their ministry and leadership in the church.

“We need to give them responsibility and trust them, because this is their time to do it.” ♦

# ‘Renewing my strength day by day’



## Betty Aldeano's Story

*I am a person of few words, but I would like to share with you these moments of great sorrow, disappointment, fear and, at the same time, trust in the Lord as His daughter.*

**“I can only tell you to continue to pray. It is not yet over, but through the mercy of our God we can have the victory.”**

**-- Betty Aldeano,  
nurse**

I was afraid, I confess. I never imagined that a virus was so powerful that it left no one to escape. During all these days I felt all kinds of feelings in my heart: anger, sadness, disappointment and fear.

I was afraid of having to change my form of life, and the possibility of changes in my work. They tell you that you will have to change departments, and go to a department where you have never worked—one with COVID-19-infected patients.

At first we didn't have all the needed personal protection equipment (PPE). It's bad to hear that you're being sent to fight evil without having tools to defend your own safety.

None of you can imagine what it's like to wear this protective equipment with a lead coat of almost 15 kilograms (33 pounds). I confess that the second time I had to wear this full-body covering, I literally had a crisis of claustrophobia. I could not breathe, and twice I had to take off the hood that covered my head. I sweated a lot, and my breath became more and more difficult. I can tell you that the whole team has had similar experiences. I thank my colleagues, who managed to reassure me during a traumatic situation in which I seemed to faint.

One day, I accompanied a patient to his room and realized the real severity of this devious and lethal disease. During the transfer, my gaze went into the rooms of the other patients and my heart broke in two. I wanted to embrace these people, because I saw the suffering and fear in their expressions.

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# ITALY: 'Terrifying pressure,' but God brings assurance

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I can only tell you to continue to pray. It is not yet over, but through the mercy of our God we can have the victory.

I thank all of you for your prayers. I am aware that God hears the requests of His children. ♦

-- Betty Aldeano works at a public hospital in Florence and attends the Florence Church of the Nazarene.

## Karina Siche's Story

*I work in a nursing home where we take care of people of different ages who are afflicted with different diseases. We used to promote many activities within and outside our facility, such as an Alzheimers café, drama, choir, music therapy, yoga, birthday parties, and walks To the lake. These activities gave pleasure to our elderly residents.*

The pandemic has created many limitations and tensions for our staff and residents. Our daily routine has radically changed.

Above all, we are managing personal relationships with colleagues and guests differently.

A primary part of our job, usually, is to give affection and empathy to these vulnerable people through a hug or a caress. People affected with Alzheimer's perceive our care and affection through our touch, and it is hard for them to feel it otherwise.

Not being able to do that now is a huge displeasure for them and for us. Wearing masks all the time means we cannot even show our smile.



Karina and Niccolò are Nazarene health care workers in Italy.



There would be a lot to say, but I will be brief in saying that God shows me the positive side.

God works in me, renewing my strength day by day, helping me manage a new way to relate to colleagues and guests, as in this particular situation it is not easy. ♦

-- Karina Siche is attends the Church of the Nazarene in Florence, Italy.

## Niccolò's Story

*It is difficult to summarize the multitude of thoughts as I tried very hard to keep my mind off what was going on outside.*

I don't consider myself a male nurse on the front line. I can't afford to consider myself as part of that front that is fighting against this hidden, treacherous enemy that is as invisible as a traitor.

Despite this, it was not easy to live with the idea that we were in real danger, especially knowing that some people were more vulnerable to the lethality of this pandemic.

These most vulnerable people are those who have lived through our nation's history; people who represent the cultural past of our country; people who should be seen as authentic roots of our era and not simply as ... old people.

It is precisely by working for these people that I experienced this authentic psychodrama: constantly aware of the fact that all our behavior or actions could make the difference in whether these people lived or died. Not surprisingly, the first few days were terrifying, given the pressure we experienced.

The fear of being a transmission vehicle to my patients dominated every other emotion, as if it were **not enough to constantly go out for work matters. I expressed my concerns to my family, who did not know how to console me or reassure me since they, too, felt the same fear.**

see "STRENGTH" • page 6

# STRENGTH: 'By playing my role, I can influence the lives of many people'

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As humanity proves incapable of giving you an answer, here comes the One who is in control of everything, the One who is at the base and the center, not only of our world, but of our universe.

Here, too, God has been able to reveal Himself strongly, with a force such as to transform a simple act of consolation into an action of pure motivation.

In fact, He did nothing supernatural. He did not act exclusively for me because He listened to my request for help. It just made me realize what my role was at this moment in history. A role in which I simply had to carry out my job; a role in which it is necessary to work with the awareness of loving one's patients; a role in which I do not serve only "patients": I serve grandparents, mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers.

By playing my simple role, I can influence the lives of many people, and that's what God allowed me to understand by simply asking for His help. ♦

## Nazarenes raise 8,000 euro in jog-a-thon



By Gina Grate Pottenger  
and Dorli Gschwandtner

*"As I was jogging for NES, I became mindful of the huge blessing this institution is for many families. I jogged with joy," said Samia, an administrator at the Nazarene Evangelical School (NES) in Beirut, Lebanon.*

While stay-at-home orders to slow the spread of coronavirus have generally halted, closed or cancelled many activities around the world, it actually expanded a fundraiser that started in Germany to include people in three other nations.

This May, the annual jog-a-thon, usually held as large group events in several German cities, could not

Photo credit: NES

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# JOG: 'God used this event to remind us of His care'

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take place as usual. Rather than cancel the fundraiser, organizers decided to open the event to anyone, anywhere, who was willing to find sponsors and then walk, jog or run individually in their location. The event is organized by Nazarene churches in Germany, in cooperation with Helping Hands e.V., a nonprofit organization in Germany that is founded and operated by Nazarenes.

This May, more than 100 people in Germany, Spain, Lebanon and the United States walked, ran or jogged (and one person cycled) in the annual jog-a-thon that has so far raised more than 8,000 euro for NES.

Another (decentralized) jog-a-thon will take place in Berlin from June 7th to 14th. The "Berlin Joggathon" also will send 50 percent of its proceeds to the school in Beirut.

## First-time project recipients have helped with fundraiser

This was the first year since the jog-a-thon tradition began in Gelnhausen in 1986 for organizers to invite people from the sponsored project itself to participate in the fundraiser.

The school embraced the idea and promoted it heavily on its Facebook page. Sixty-eight joggers in Lebanon secured sponsors in Lebanon and Germany; the sponsors each pledged a certain amount to the project for each kilometer their participant ran or walked. Among the joggers in Lebanon were 21 current students and one recent graduate, 14 teachers and

administrators, and both the current and former school principals. The youngest runner was 3 years old.

The NES students, in particular, were enthusiastic about the idea of running together for their school.

"May I do flips and cartwheels, too? Does that count?" asked a student. After being told how a jog-a-thon works, he proudly ran eight kilometers—and ended with a somersault for the school.

For staff and students of NES, the event was about more than raising money to help fund needed renovations for their school. It was about helping to strengthen bonds of international friendship, and improving morale by sharing a sense of love and

care across many miles.

"With the recent jog-a-thon event, teachers, students, and parents also learned that we have good friends in Germany who are trying their best to help NES," said NES Principal Mshantaf. "The jog-a-thon has helped lift our mood, and has given us hope in the future. God used this event to remind us again of His care for this ministry. In more than one way, we continue to be Jesus' presence for the kids in Beirut because you are Jesus' presence in Germany."

NES provides a high quality education to 230+ students, from kindergarten age through grade 9. Many of the students are refugees. The school suspended classes when stay-at-home orders began and, like many schools, provided home-based learning for students until the school year's close.

"It was great from a psychological side and physical side," wrote a teacher who preferred to remain anonymous. "Our minds weren't on all the problems around us, but on the good cause that we jogged for."

## Changed format a success

The runners in Germany were also enthusiastic about it, despite the changed format that was well received in this exceptional situation.

"Individually on the road, but for a common cause, especially brilliant under corona conditions!" said the Helping Hands' secretary, Fabian Fuss.

Simon Bangert, chairman of Helping Hands e.V., summarized what many felt:

"The Joggathon 2020 exceeded our expectations in many ways. Be it the strong commitment of the runners in Germany and Lebanon or the generosity of the sponsors, we are thankful that we were able to move so many people. Thank you." ♦

To donate to NES, visit <https://ps.ncm.org/project/acm1269>

### FAST FACTS

Participation: 121 people

Where: 45+ locations across Germany, Spain, Lebanon, USA

Oldest participant: 79, 5 km

Youngest participant: 3 yrs, 6 km

Fastest time: 13.63km (Christian Bangert)

Total distance: 816 km

Total raised: 8,000+ Euro



Photo credit: NES

# 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](http://www.nazarene.org/articles-faith)

*"Peter and the other apostles replied:  
"We must obey God rather than  
men!"*

*—Acts 5:29*

## Prayer requests

Please pray for the Nazarene health workers in Italy, and front line 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 routine appointments to divert resources to fighting the virus.

Pray for the students, staff and teachers at the Nazarene Evangelical School in Lebanon, as they try to continue providing education and services to students amid coronavirus lockdowns and financial challenges. Ask God to encourage them, keep them united, and to provide for all their needs.

Pray for the Church in Russia, as pastors, lay people and friends of the Church find ways to worship, study God's word and pray together over distances through technology. Ask God to help them see and grasp new opportunities.

## Where Worlds Meet

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