

NCM

MAGAZINE

COMING TOGETHER FOR HEALTH & WHOLENESS

NAZARENES IN COTE D'IVOIRE
PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY
WELLNESS THROUGH CLEAN
WATER AND SANITATION.

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LISTENING TO GOD & LEARNING FROM NEIGHBORS

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UNITY & FRIENDSHIP IN NEPAL

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2023 // ISSUE 2

NCM Magazine aims to tell stories of the church living out Christ's compassion. Our hope is that all of us would hear the call to compassion as a lifestyle.



Following the example of Jesus, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries partners with local congregations around the world to clothe, shelter, feed, heal, educate, and live in solidarity with those who suffer under oppression, injustice, violence, poverty, hunger, and disease. NCM exists in and through the Church of the Nazarene to proclaim the gospel to all people in word and deed.

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GOD'S KINGDOM IN OUR COMMUNITIES AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

By Nell Becker Sweeden, Director of NCM

God is doing incredible things through creative and hope-filled churches around the world. Most often, these congregations are small, rural, and scattered across continents in some of the most remote pockets of our planet. These congregations are comprised of entrepreneurial pastors and devoted disciples who are community leaders; they are often teachers, farmers, mechanics, and more. They are Christ-followers who devote their lives to teaching kids and who work tirelessly when a storm strikes or crops fail.

Last year, I had the privilege of shadowing one of our Nazarene volunteers serving at train stations in Przemysl, Poland, helping Ukrainian refugees seek safety across the border. Iryna's feet never stopped moving, and her eyes never stopped scanning the crowd for those who needed help. What an incredible gift it was to stand with her and serve alongside her for several days.

When the trains arrived, and the women and children poured out, Iryna's trained eye found those who needed extra care. She spotted the elderly women who were traveling alone and would struggle with the stone steps. We carried their suitcases, and she chatted with them while providing a calming assurance. She saw the moms with young kids who needed a hand. She identified teenagers who seemed bored and gave them a colorful pen, paper pad, or

stickers. She knew they wouldn't say much, but she knew they needed something to do and someone who cared enough to notice.

It was beautiful to witness Iryna in action as the hands and feet of Christ. Iryna has been an incredible gift of God for others in their time of pain, uncertainty, fear, and need throughout the war on Ukraine. She continues to serve in new ways and embody what it means to live out God's compassion for the world. Thank you, Iryna.

There are thousands upon thousands of faithful servants like Iryna serving in the Lord's church that is truly beyond borders. What a testimony to the power and the love of God they are! Servants like Iryna testify to the Lord's "kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

Even in the midst of hard times and difficult circumstances, God is working in our communities, and we are invited to join. Often, God is working in very small and unassuming ways. God wants to give us new eyes and new ears to hear where transformation is needed. May we, too, see the elderly, the child, the single mom, the teenager, the immigrant, the prisoner, and our neighbor with the eyes of Christ.

This is what it means to live out compassion in the world, and each of us is invited into this Kingdom—into this new way in the world—the way of Jesus. May the world be transformed by his love through us. ●

"For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."

Matthew 25:42-43

CONNECTION POINTS

Holistic Child Development

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS LEAD TO COMMUNITY FLOURISHING

Story and Photos provided by NCM Africa

In Yombo, Tanzania, the local church, in partnership with NCM, has developed a creative idea to support local ministry — a car wash that is staffed by young people who are connected to the church and need income.

This project has strengthened, improved, and supported the local church's work by supporting the ministry of the child development center (CDC) as well as providing an income for young people working at the carwash. The local church developed the car wash site and has ensured its maintenance.

Within a year, they were able to buy an additional car wash machine and vacuum cleaner. They are exploring ways to continue to grow, including opening a refreshments shop, establishing kitchen gardens, and securing more property next to the bus station to develop an additional car wash in the community. They consider their efforts to be a story of hope.

Even as they hope and dream about the next steps for the church, they continue to work with NCM, conducting strength-building training with the community and other churches in the area, encouraging sustainable, compassionate ministry and holistic approaches to meeting the needs of children.

The car wash has empowered the center to continue to provide care in holistic ways for 35 children who are

at risk and vulnerable. Through this center, children are given the tools and resources to grow spiritually as well.

The project provides funds to purchase supplies to ensure children receive successful education and social development. Finally, the center focuses on the children's physical well-being by providing opportunities to play sports, participate in a food program, and receive nutrition and hygiene education.

Nadia*, a parent of children who attend the center, has seen how her children's lives have been impacted.

"Since this CDC started about two years ago, we are seeing our children's behavior change for the better," said Nadia. "When they return home, I notice they implement what they were taught at the CDC."

Students have seen the social benefits of attending the center.

"My grades have improved since I started attending the [center] because I can get [together] with friends to discuss homework with them," said Mila*, grade 7. "It improves my understanding when I finally do it myself. My friends from school would also want to start attending next year because I told them the power of friends." ●

**Names changed for protection*



Q&A



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE OUT COMPASSION DAILY?

“Compassion starts with friendship. When we are friends with people, we are willing to walk with them. So, if you’re going to show compassion to your neighbors, you might need to be ready to go out of your comfort zone. Go to a church service in another language and experience what it’s like not to know what is going on all the time because you don’t speak the language. Sometimes, we think we have to create some big program, but the truth is we can show a lot of compassion and learn a lot when we show up for people. If you don’t know where to start, consider volunteering with an existing organization.”

- Bree Salthouse, Department of Justice Accredited Representative in Monrovia California

(read more about ministry in Monrovia, California on page 18)

“Most people in our area do not know about Jesus Christ; some of our neighbors are in a very tough community. So, compassion looks like planting the seeds of God’s love and transforming people’s lives through discipleship and care.”

- Ganga Mukhiya, NCM Nepal

(read more about Agape ministry in Nepal on page 24)

“You can show compassion daily by actively listening to others without judgment, offering help when needed, and practicing empathy by considering their feelings and perspectives. Small acts of kindness, like offering a smile or a kind word, can also go a long way in demonstrating your care and concern for those around you.”

-Leody Echavez, NCM Asia-Pacific

(read more about water wells in Myanmar on page 8)

COMPASSION

— THROUGH THE —

WORD OF GOD

1

everyday compassion

Sometimes, living compassionately feels difficult because it doesn't look like what you see others doing. Consider what God's call to compassion looks like in your life, using your unique gifts, passion, and talents.

REFLECT

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." 1 Peter 4:10

God has created each of us uniquely with different gifts, callings, and talents. Spend some time meditating on how Jesus has gifted you. What things excite you? Where do you find yourself wanting to invest your time?

2

BRAINSTORM

Not everyone is called to work for a nonprofit or as a pastor at his or her local church, but we are all called to live compassionately. How can you use your time and gifts to serve those around you? Get creative!

For example:

Do you enjoy going for walks? Invite a neighbor, who otherwise might be lonely to go on a walk with you. Do you love baking? Host a bake sale and donate the proceeds to the nonprofit of your choice!

3

SHARE

Even with the best intentions, it's easy to forget to live with compassion as life gets busy. Share with a friend the ways God has gifted you, and invite them to hold you accountable to serving as God calls you.

TRANSFORMING LIVES

Water wells in Myanmar bring sustainability to rural communities.

PHOTOS AND STORY BY
LEODY TAN ECHAVEZ IIII

In the remote corners of Myanmar, the lack of access to clean water has been an arduous challenge for countless families. The journey to retrieve water from distant sources often stretches over many kilometers, leaving individuals grappling with the scarcity of this basic necessity.

The repercussions are dire: waterborne diseases, compromised hygiene, inadequate sanitation, and limited opportunities for education and employment. Against the backdrop of a nation plagued by civil unrest, the struggle for survival has intensified. The ongoing conflict has uprooted lives, with countless civilians displaced and homes destroyed. Farmers find their fields barren due to the scourge of war, while inflation and soaring prices make even basic sustenance a battle. The crisis has given rise to an urgent need for health education, as communities must now fend for their own well-being amid dwindling resources and rising threats of diseases.

Yet, amid these grueling situations, a glimmer of hope emerges. In partnership with Nazarene Compassionate Ministries, undeterred by strife, local Nazarene churches have initiated a life-transforming

project to provide clean water, sanitation, and hygiene solutions for the affected communities. This endeavor seeks to quench physical thirst and instill a renewed sense of compassion and discipleship through the local churches' involvement.

The driving force behind this transformative project is a fervent desire to alleviate the community's suffering. After witnessing people travel great distances for a sip of clean water, local churches took on a mission to help the community. The vision extended beyond mere provision; it encompassed trust-building, relationship-forging, and a profound demonstration of love in action. The project was conceived as an embodiment of God's love and an opportunity for the local churches to show the community the same care they experienced from God.

The local churches' engagement with the community was proactive and holistic. Planning, labor, and maintenance of the wells became shared endeavors, fostering a sense of ownership and unity. The once-daunting task of accessing clean water was replaced with the convenience of wells within arm's reach. This transformation, however, transcended the

MINING

physical realm. Through this compassionate service, the local churches fostered a deeper connection with the community, enabling them to share the Word of God and bring the message of hope and salvation.

TESTIMONY

The story of Maung Sai serves as a testament to the transformative power of the water well project. Initially a non-believer, Sai's encounter with the local pastor, James, altered the trajectory of his life. When asked to contribute to the well-drilling efforts, he willingly participated. As he labored alongside the pastor, conversations about faith and God were interwoven with the physical work. Through these interactions, Sai's heart softened, eventually leading him to embrace Christianity. Sai was baptized by the pastor, and his new life was paralleled by the successful drilling of the well—a symbol of both spiritual and physical rejuvenation.

The local church's support for Maung Sai extended far beyond his conversion. Regular fellowships, prayer sessions, and Bible studies bolstered his faith and nurtured his spiritual growth. Recognizing his commitment to serve, the church facilitated his enrollment at Chapman International College in Yangon, nurturing his potential for ministry. Compassion, as exemplified through the well project, played a pivotal role in Maung Sai's transformation, serving as a bridge that connected him to a deeper spiritual understanding.

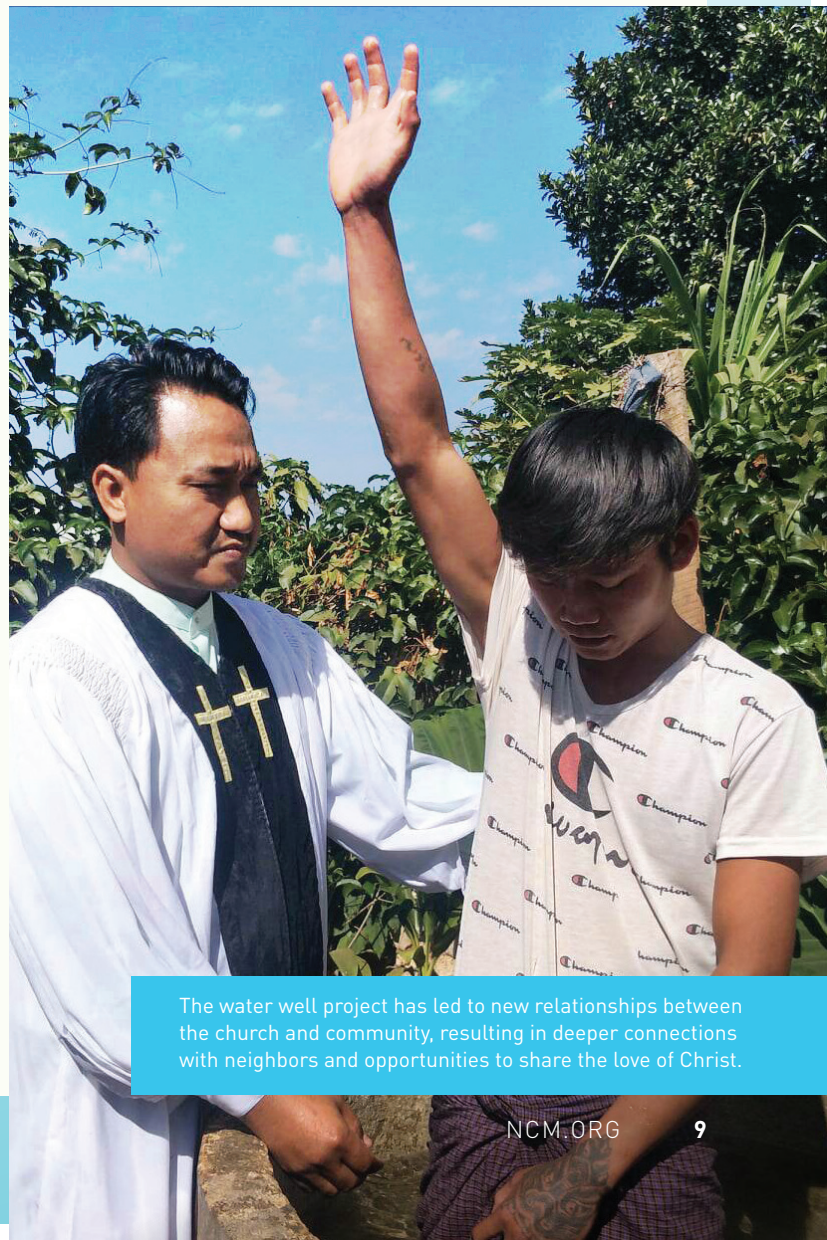
MEETING THE NEEDS

For the local churches, identifying the need to access water was not merely an administrative task but a journey of understanding the community's struggles. Visits and discussions during evangelism efforts allowed the churches to grasp the full extent of the challenge. Their involvement went beyond well-digging; they invested in the necessary infrastructure to ensure long-term functionality. Installing electric power meters and a compressor helped safeguard the community's access to clean water.

Through the wells, the churches addressed a multifaceted range of needs. In addition to enhancing physical health, the clean water also sparked trust and

relationship-building. This comprehensive approach, grounded in compassionate discipleship, aimed at not only quenching the community's physical thirst but also satisfying spiritual hunger. The commitment to long-term sustainability extended beyond the project's inception. A dedicated group emerged, tasked with the care and upkeep of the wells. Infrastructure improvements, including walls and roofs, fortified the wells against the elements. This approach transformed maintenance into a communal endeavor, uniting the community in their shared responsibility.

As the community embraced its role in the wells' upkeep, a deep sense of ownership blossomed. These initiatives not only cultivated practical skills among community members but also instilled virtues of patience, care, and responsibility—integral aspects of discipleship. The wells became symbols of the partnership between the local church and the community, illustrating the symbiotic nature of compassionate ministry and sustainable development, which opened doors for deeper connections and evangelism.



The water well project has led to new relationships between the church and community, resulting in deeper connections with neighbors and opportunities to share the love of Christ.

A NEWFOUND HOPE

In the face of ongoing conflicts, the water well project became a beacon of hope for both the local church and the community. Clean water was not only a source of physical relief but a conduit for building trust and understanding amid adversities. The wells acted as communal gathering points, strengthening relationships and offering solace in times of strife.

When faced with challenges, the local church found a unique platform for discipleship and evangelism. The well project laid the groundwork for conversations about faith, providing an entry point for sharing the gospel and building trust through compassion. The relationships nurtured through this compassionate endeavor transformed opposition into openness, resulting in a fertile ground for the seeds of faith to flourish. The water well project's impact not only transcended clean water access but also acted as a catalyst for broader development, as relationships

formed around the wells paved the way for evangelism and discipleship. The wells became spaces to reduce logistical struggles and remove barriers between the local church and the unbelievers. Once symbols of adversity, these spaces were transformed into arenas of connection, dialogue, and transformation.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Myanmar water wells project offers invaluable insights for churches and organizations seeking to practice compassionate discipleship. Beyond the act of helping those in need, the project showcases the potential for ministry and evangelism, which are not separate entities but intertwined facets of a greater whole, through practical acts of love.

The lessons extend beyond the confines of Myanmar, providing a roadmap for replication. Through practical service, the local church ignited a transformative process that brought together physical and spiritual well-being.

As the project continues to flourish, it stands as a testament of compassion's transformative power, demonstrating that even in the midst of conflict, love in action has the potential to renew lives, communities, and faith. ●



Neighbors gather to collect water at a newly dug well, providing clean water for an entire community.



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A blue-tinted photograph of a water tap with water splashing into a bucket. The scene is set in a rustic, possibly outdoor or semi-outdoor, environment with a rough concrete wall. The water is captured in mid-air, creating a dynamic splash in the bucket below. The overall mood is clean and refreshing, emphasizing the theme of water and health.

Coming Together for Health & Wholeness

her th ess

A CHURCH IN COTE D'IVOIRE
BRINGS NEIGHBORS TOGETHER
THROUGH WATER SANITATION
AND HYGIENE (WASH)
PRACTICES.





STORY AND PHOTOS BY GINA POTTENGER

If you are not interested in the community, the community will not be interested in you,” says Christelle Bossina, national director of NCM for Cote D’Ivoire.

As our taxi navigates around deep potholes filled with rainwater, Christelle interrupts herself to say, “Look!” She points at a group of young men shoveling garbage and mud from the city’s deep cement gutters. A broad smile crosses her face. She explains that the people of the Andokoi neighborhood are cleaning their streets—something they didn’t do before the Grace Church of the Nazarene began its monthly street cleaning project.

Called WASH, the project’s objective is to improve residents’ health and prevent reoccurring illnesses caused by daily exposure to sewage and standing water.

Kickstarted through a two-year grant from NCM, WASH stands for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene. Grace church’s WASH program also includes educational initiatives, empowering people to more effectively care for their own hygiene, sanitation, and clean water.

By modeling how to improve their immediate environment, the short-term project has grown into a movement that has taken on a life of its own – as attested by the young men mucking out the gutters without coordination through the church.

SEEDS OF SERVICE

Grace Church of the Nazarene wouldn’t exist today without a vision to care for Andokoi’s residents in a tangible way.

Andokoi is an economically struggling community adjoining Abidjan, a large city near the coast of Cote D’Ivoire.

In 1987, the Church of the Nazarene sent Dr. Ron Farris to Abidjan as a medical missionary to establish a network of health clinics in Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Nigeria. Based in the Andokoi neighborhood, Farris got an up-close-and-personal look at how people suffered

from preventable and sometimes fatal diseases, including dysentery, malaria, and more. Many are also stricken with HIV. So Farris set up a Nazarene health clinic in Andokoi.

One of the first local people to join the clinic staff was Taki.

Taki had planned a military career as an army medic. Just as he finished his training, he met Farris, learned about the love of Jesus, and gave his life to Christ. He left the army and became a nurse at the new Nazarene health clinic.

Over the years, Farris, Taki, and other clinic staff led many patients to Jesus. Many people began following Jesus, and they needed a church to worship God together and grow in their faith. Grace Church of the Nazarene was founded next door to the health clinic. Taki became ordained and is one of the first Nazarene pastors in Cote D’Ivoire. Today, he treats patients in the clinic in the mornings and serves the community as pastor in the afternoons and evenings.

But despite decades of treating patients, the preventable diseases just never stopped.



Leaders at the health clinic have served their community for over 30 years.

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

In 2016, Serge and Christelle Bossina joined Grace church. A lawyer at a local bank, Christelle quickly gave her free time to volunteer in the church's compassionate ministries. Serge became the NCM coordinator for Abidjan, while Christelle took on the role of national director.

Over time, they noticed that the same people repeatedly visited Grace church's health clinic with the same preventable illnesses.

"So we sat down and said, 'OK, why treat the problem at the end? We must, in addition, treat the problem at the source,'" Christelle explains. "That is how we noticed that our surroundings, our environment, was not healthy."

Homes and businesses line the gutters. Abidjan's torrential, equatorial rainstorms rush through Andokoi's unpaved streets, sweeping trash, sewage, and mud into the gutters. Without adequate wastewater infrastructure, the gutters overflow with each new storm, occasionally flooding homes and businesses. Mosquitoes and bacteria

"THEY FELT THEY BELONGED SOMEWHERE BUT THIS TIME IT WASN'T A BAD GROUP BUT A GROUP BELONGING TO GOD, IN CHRIST."

breed in standing water. People walk through sewage on their way to work and school.

All that sewage and standing water was making the church's neighbors sick.

A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Despite the health clinic's presence, there remained a disconnect between the church and its community. Christelle says that neighbors could not see, taste, touch, or hear God's love through God's people even though the church was in the neighborhood. The community had not been transformed.

"The question that we ask the people of this church is, 'If by some extraordinary means this church were to disappear, would the community miss us? What is it that we do more than others? What do we bring to this community in which we live?' And that question causes the people of God to stop and think," Christelle said.

As she pondered, Christelle came up with an idea: What if the church leads the community in cleaning up our own neighborhood?

She and some other leaders traveled to Ghana to participate in an NCM-sponsored WASH training. They learned about the impact of water on people's



Volunteers with the church go into the community to share about the new WASH project.

health and how to educate them to improve sanitation conditions.

"It could be that you have water but do not really know how to use that water properly," Christelle explains. "WASH will train you on how to efficiently use water. WASH also includes a program that creates awareness on general wellness: How to keep one's house clean, how to be well-nourished, and how to know the difference between where to have a bowel movement and where to prepare food. Or, if you do not have enough water, the program teaches how to be efficient with water."

FROM CLEAN STREETS TO RENEWED LIVES

With this new knowledge, the congregation organized home visits to convince their neighbors to join a cleanup project.

People protested the church's attempts since they pay taxes to the government to clean up their surroundings. However, the church moved forward with the project.

After seeing that the church people were climbing into the filthy gutters with shovels and gloves, some neighbors and even bored street children started to help the church members with the tools and personal

protective equipment that were provided. Together, they worked shoulder to shoulder, cleaning up their community and sharing a meal together after work. Some of those kids started coming to church every Sunday.

“They felt they belonged somewhere but this time it wasn't a bad group but a group belonging to God, in Christ,” said Christelle.

Some children have experienced remarkable transformation through the influence of the church community. A few others returned home and found work; one of them is now a teacher and another is training to become a police officer.

“One time we were cleaning the gutter, and two young men were walking by.... They were so drunk,” Christelle says. “They stopped and said, ‘What are you doing?’ And we said, ‘We do this for Jesus because, if not for Jesus, none of us would leave home to come out and clean the gutter of a friend.’”

The next thing she knew, one of the young men picked up a shovel and got down into the gutter, joining the cleanup. The following Sunday, he showed up for worship. Now, he’s a member of the church.

“It's extraordinary,” Christelle says. “God just needs us to take action, and then it is like a seed planted in the ground. God takes care of watering the plant and producing its fruit to get the result that God wants. That's it. God simply wants us to be tools in his hands that

“TODAY, THANKS TO THIS PROGRAM, I CAN SAY WITH CONFIDENCE THAT NOW THE PEOPLE KNOW THEIR OWN VALUE AND THE VALUE OF THIS CHURCH TO THE COMMUNITY.”

he will use for his glory. Truly, that is what the WASH program has brought to us.”

ORDINARY ACT, EXTRAORDINARY TRANSFORMATION

Like many others, Djakis grew up on the streets because of abuse at home. To survive, he became hardened and dangerous, recruiting other kids to form his own gang and enticing them to commit acts of petty crime.

During the COVID-19 lockdowns, some Grace church volunteers brought food and supplies to his neighborhood. Although sullen and suspicious, he listened to the group, but after the team left, he couldn't stop thinking about them.

“Why are they coming?” he asked himself. “People can love us like that?”

He wanted to know more about those who loved freely, asking nothing in return. So, he visited the church



Christelle and Serge saw the community WASH project as an opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ in a tangible way.

to learn more. He had never been to church had never heard about Jesus. Watching them, he told himself, “I need to change. I need to seize this opportunity.” He gave his life to Jesus and got heavily involved in the church, including the Saturday cleanups.

AN IDEA TURNED INTO A MOVEMENT

Now, residents organize their own cleanups without the church being involved.

“We see that the youth of this neighborhood are working independently to get up and mobilize each other,” Christelle says. “When passing through, we saw at least two different groups of kids who didn't even know each other cleaning the gutters, cleaning the storefronts, because they have understood the message.”

It is a message of victory over circumstances, a message that people have the power to change things for the better if they decide to do it.

It's not just residents who got this message. Other denominations in the city have joined the effort, including the leader of the Evangelical Alliance.

TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SERVICE

Serving others the way Christ would serve has transformed the Nazarene congregation, too.

“Before, I would say that people came to church for themselves,” Christelle says. “They just came to be saved, to pray to God, and then go back home. But today, thanks to this program, I can say with confidence that now the people know their own value and the value of this church to the community.”

Once the church proved that it was interested in the community, the community became interested in the church and its message of hope in Jesus.

“All of these acts, all that we do in the world, [are evidences] of the love of Christ. And I bless the Lord for this church that makes this possible throughout the world.” ●

CROATIA



Croatia, located in southeastern Europe, boasts a breathtaking coastline along the Adriatic Sea and a fascinating blend of historic cities and natural beauty. A captivating destination that offers a perfect blend of history and scenic beauty.



The Pula Arena in Pula, Croatia is the only remaining Roman amphitheater in the world to maintain its four side towers.



The world's smallest town is in Croatia. The town of Hum has a population of between 17-23 people.



Croatia borders five countries. Their neighbors include Slovenia, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro as well as the Adriatic sea.



Croatia has more than 1,200 islands, islets, and crags off the coast of the mainland.



Croatia is one of the most verdant and green countries in the world. Ten percent of the country is home to 11 nature Parks, 8 national parks, and 2 nature reserves. One of its most famous national parks is Plitvice Lakes National Park.

To read about the work of the church in Croatia turn to page 26.

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*your Stories
of Compassion!*

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Listening to God and Learning from Neighbors

STORY BY DANA FRANCHETTI

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MOUNTAINSIDE COMMUNION CHURCH

On a warm Wednesday afternoon in late summer, there's a flurry of activities around the campus of Mountainside Communion Church. Outside, neighbors from the community tend their gardens and pick what they need from the free produce section. Others meet inside for virtual and in-person book studies and times of prayer while volunteers with the housing partnership answer phone calls from renters seeking advice and assistance amid the housing crisis in the greater Los Angeles, California, area. Still, more families and individuals huddle around blue legal folders in conference rooms, talking with employees of the Immigration Resource Center (IRC).

Mountainside Communion Church of the Nazarene partners with NCM and the Nazarene Immigration Network to provide low-cost legal assistance to people seeking help navigating their immigration process.

Some of the staff at the IRC are lawyers, while others are accredited through a program with the Department of Justice, where nonprofits are trained to provide low-cost, secure immigration legal services to people on the immigration pathway.

"When we planted this church 18 years ago, we never could have dreamed up the work that the

Spirit was stirring up within this community," said Josh Smith, lead pastor. "It's all been born out of the relationship. We believe in listening to God and listening to our neighbors, and we have found that we can often listen to God by listening to our neighbors."

Mountainside's ministries started as small, simple responses to meet community needs that eventually grew into the current scale.

"The garden started because we noticed our neighbor's fruit trees had extra fruit on them, so we partnered together to pick it and share it. The housing initiative started as we built relationships with the city. The IRC started because we volunteered with a local youth program," explained Josh. "Then we just kept saying yes to what God and our neighbors were asking us to do from there."

One opportunity they said yes to changed the ministry of their church in powerful ways. In 2010, the congregants at Mountainside began volunteering at a local youth organization where they spent time building friendships, having fun, tutoring, and mentoring local teens.

Within a year of this partnership developing, the U.S. President signed an executive order into effect called Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals



Mountainside Communion Church's community gardens have become a gathering place for neighbors.

(DACA), which temporarily shields individuals from deportation and provides them with legal work permits. To qualify for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a person must have arrived in the U.S. prior to turning 16, be under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012, be a person of good moral character, as well as completed high school or its equivalent, or be a veteran.

Ulises Gutierrez was the leader of the youth organization at the time.

"I knew that a lot of our kids would qualify for DACA, and I knew that Mountainside loved these kids and would want to help provide this level of safety and stability for them," said Ulises. "So, I asked them to help,"

Mountainside connected with a local lawyer willing to provide oversight to ensure the work was done correctly and they got to work.

Access to DACA helps thousands of children who are brought to the United States without proper documentation to be able to finish high school, go to college, and live full and healthy lives in the only place they've ever known as home. "We hosted informational events to help people understand what they qualified for. We must have had 500 people at those events," explained Ulises.

"We helped well over 100 teenagers qualify for DACA."

THROUGH RELATIONSHIP COMES UNDERSTANDING

Through this experience, Mountainside Communion became aware of the great need for secure and trustworthy legal counsel for those navigating the complex immigration pathway.

Jonathan Fung, an attorney who serves as director of legal services with the IRC, explained that financial burdens and transportation needs, along with the unethical approach of some legal advisors who take advantage of the situation, keep many people who are immigrants from accessing the legal benefits they are entitled to.

"There are so many people that cannot access the legal benefits they are entitled to because of financial or geographic burdens. If someone does not have reliable transportation or if they can't get time off work to meet with an attorney, it's incredibly difficult to navigate this process. Not to mention, there are so many people that are taking advantage of our neighbors who are in this incredibly vulnerable space, charging them thousands of dollars and never completing their cases," explained Jonathan.

"We really are trying to humanize people's stories and experiences. We want people to understand that in a system that sees thousands of people daily, each person has a unique story, a unique set of circumstances," said Josh.

After 11 years of serving their community in this way, the IRC has four people on staff, including one attorney, one senior paralegal, and two accredited representatives. They serve people at many different points on their immigration pathways.

Recently, the church received an increasing number of inquiries from people from Afghanistan.

"Afghan clients have come to us recently because all of the other local agencies have been so overwhelmed,"

"I WANT US TO BE ABLE TO MOVE FORWARD AND BUILD A LIFE. I WANT TO BE ABLE TO HELP OTHERS THE WAY THAT WE HAVE BEEN HELPED SINCE MOVING HERE."

explained Jonathan. "They don't really have the capacity to provide holistic care. We have this reputation that is starting to spread now because of word of mouth. This is a safe place to come and ask for help."

By listening to their community, the church has been able to help neighbors thrive through creative initiatives.



The holistic care that Mountainside is able to provide goes beyond simply filling out paperwork. They provide pastoral care alongside access to social workers who help clients navigate the complexities of the medical and housing systems, IT resources, and the community garden.

“We are not primarily here as a law firm. We are here to serve the community,” said Jonathan. “For me, that has always been a vision for asking the question of how we can be a bridge between the church and the

“I began working at one of the American bases in Afghanistan in 2012,” said Musafar.

“I worked with the inventory. So, when someone needed a new uniform or computer, or anything really, it was my job to get it for them.”

He worked on the base through the COVID-19 pandemic, during which time he also lived on base due to pandemic restrictions. He wasn’t able to go home for almost two years. In the summer of

“IT’S SUCH A GIFT TO LOOK PEOPLE IN THE EYE AND SAY YES, THIS CHURCH CARES ABOUT HELPING YOUR FAMILY APPLY FOR IMMIGRATION RELIEF. THIS CHURCH CARES ABOUT YOU.”

practical needs of our neighbors. God wants to use our professional skills to build God’s kingdom. As an attorney, I used to have a really hard time finding a place where I could both practice my faith and feel like I was doing professional work. With our work through Mountainside and the IRC, I think we are creating space for people to use their work for the Kingdom of God faithfully.”

SEEKING SAFETY, FINDING HOPE

A recent client from Afghanistan experienced this wrap-around care firsthand. Musafar* was forced to come to the United States in the fall of 2021 when it became unsafe for him to stay there. His wife and four children, ages 9, 7, 5 years, and 18 months, remain in Afghanistan.

2021, the COVID-19 restrictions were finally lifted, and he returned home to his family. However, two weeks later, a new type of danger began.

“At first, when things started to change, I would change the way I drove to work every day so no one would see that I was going to the base,” he explained. “I couldn’t tell people that I worked at the base because we didn’t know who we could trust. If I shared with the wrong person, my life would be in danger.”

On August 13, 2021, the situation reached a tipping point.

“I went to the base, and everyone was going to the airport. My boss called me and told me I needed to get to the airport as soon as I could,” he recalled.

Due to overcrowding, serious safety concerns, and incredibly limited resources, Musafar's family could not join him at the airport.

"At the airport, I saw how the overcrowding was leading to people suffocating. It was chaos. I couldn't bring my kids there," he said. "But, I knew if I stayed, I would put my family at risk. It was so hard to leave, but I had to."

Eventually, Musafar settled in southern California and found a job working the night shift in a factory. Because he had no car, he traveled two and a half hours by bus to get to work and back.

"It was so hard to find anyone who could help me with my case because everyone was overwhelmed, and my work hours got in the way," he stated. "But when I met with Johnathan, I was so happy. He spoke so kindly to me. He took his time. I felt like [the IRC staff] were here because they wanted to help me."

Musafar applied for asylum and has begun the process of applying for his wife and children to join him in California.

"I am ready to be with my family. I haven't met my youngest daughter yet. I want to meet her. I want to hold her. I want us to be able to move forward and build a life. I want to be able to help others the way that we have been helped since moving here," said Musafar.

FROM CLIENTS TO NEIGHBORS

Many neighbors who were once clients at the IRC have become involved in the clinic's work. Whether it's by referring friends and family to their services, as Musafar does, volunteering as interpreters, or serving on the board, former clients are involved throughout the ministry. Marina Sorace-Ferreyro is one example of this.

Marina was born in Argentina. She came to the U.S. with her family briefly as a child and was able to learn English, go to school, and meet a boy named Ken. Her family moved back to Argentina, but that boy remained in the back of her mind.

After completing law school in Argentina and establishing a career, she reconnected with Ken. After 10 years apart, they got married.



One client gives back by leading the band at the annual IRC fundraiser.

HOSPITALITY ON CAMPUS

Eastern Nazarene College is located in Quincy, Massachusetts, near Boston. Like most major cities in the US, this region is experiencing increased numbers of migrant families joining the community (in the United States, people seeking asylum may await court hearings from within the country). Recently, the Governor of Massachusetts declared a state of emergency due to an ongoing lack of beds available to meet the initial housing needs of these new neighbors.

In response to the crisis, ENC has partnered with the Commonwealth to open a Family Welcome Center on campus, referred to on campus as the **Matthew 25 Initiative**. There, migrant families will be connected to social service agencies and practical support. In addition, a building that previously served as a dormitory has been repurposed as a temporary shelter for up to 58 families with young children, operated by a management firm with experience in providing care to asylum seekers in the US.

"ENC is in a unique position to be part of the solution to a humanitarian crisis," read a statement provided by the school. "[This] is an opportunity for the College to be good stewards of our campus resources and express Christ's call to care for people in need."

LEARN MORE

About ENC and the **Matthew 25 Initiative** at [ENC.EDU/MATTHEW-25-INITIATIVE-FAQ](https://enc.edu/matthew-25-initiative-faq)



Obtaining a visa as the spouse of a U.S. citizen is typically straightforward. The U.S. citizen applies on behalf of their spouse for a green card, which can take between 14-28 months. After three years, the green card holder can begin applying for citizenship.

However, visa applicants are advised not to travel outside of the country during the process. Marina was still wrapping up some of her cases as a lawyer in Argentina, so she put off the application process.

During this time, Ken, who was a military veteran, started changing.

“I started seeing signs that he just wasn’t himself,” Marina remembered. “He wasn’t sleeping, he couldn’t focus; he just wasn’t himself. We went to the Veterans Affairs hospital to get help, but the wait times were so long. We didn’t really know what to do.”

Navigating both the veterans’ health care system and the immigration system became hard to manage for Marina.

“One of the things that I am not sure people understand is that when someone chooses to immigrate, even when they are leaving awful situations or moving for someone they love, they are going to spend the rest of their lives living with a broken heart,” she said. “Your heart is now in two places. Even when it’s better for

your family, there are elements of your identity that you are going to miss, and then you get this new identity labeled on you of ‘immigrant,’ which can be really cool but also really challenging. . . people don’t realize how much those papers impact every single area of our lives and how daunting the system is to navigate.”

Eventually, Ken’s mental health trouble led him to seek long-term care. Mental health treatment helped him begin his healing process, but Marina still had to figure out her immigration process.

“We filed the initial paperwork ourselves, without any legal counsel. Because our lives at that moment became so unstable, we moved a lot. I don’t know exactly what happened—maybe I didn’t forward my mail correctly—but I missed a notice at some point,” she explained. “My case was just in limbo somewhere on someone’s desk, not moving forward. However, in this season of crisis after crisis, I just didn’t have the bandwidth to address it. I kept telling myself I’d take care of it, but then another crisis would hit.”

Eventually, she contacted Veterans Affairs to see if they had any resources to help her and her husband.

“The VA gave me a printout of more than 20 pages of immigration lawyers, and I am not kidding when I say that I made hundreds of calls, and everyone kept telling me they couldn’t help,” she said. “From that giant list, I narrowed it down to five agencies. One of them asked me to do something unethical, the other three ended up not being able to help me, and the last one was the IRC at Mountainside.”

She made an appointment at the Mountainside IRC, but as the appointment neared, she realized that she didn’t have the \$40 consultation fee.

“I remember that I called, and Rosa picked up the phone. I told her that I had to cancel,” she explained. “Rosa asked why, and I was so embarrassed, but I told her the truth. She said there is no way that you are canceling because of money!”

So Marina went to the appointment.

“The whole setting was just lovely. I saw the garden at the front of the church, and I just felt at home. Johnathan sat with me, and we made a plan. I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. They could help!”

Marina noticed a significant difference in the way that this resource center functioned, especially when one of the centers “asked me to do something unethical and lie about my case. I wasn’t willing to do that.”

At Mountainside, she said, “I felt like a human being. I felt like I had dignity. I felt that my story mattered enough to have privacy and individual attention.”

Marina and her family are in a very different place now.

“We have started rebuilding little by little. My husband is healthy, I don’t have to worry about my citizenship, and our family is moving forward on the journey that we always wanted for ourselves.”

Marina now volunteers with the IRC, helping with interpretation and serving on the board.

“They asked me to serve on the board because I had been a client and because I have a legal background. I knew I wanted to give back because I knew how life-changing this work could be,” she says.

THE FAMILY OF GOD

Both clients and the center’s staff understand the life-changing impact of access to trustworthy legal advice provided by people who care about helping others through the entire process.

Rosa Cándida Ramírez is an ordained elder with the Church of the Nazarene and is accredited with the Department of Justice to provide immigration services. She comes from a mixed-status family — some members are U.S. citizens or have lawful permanent status (green cards), and other family members do not have lawful status.

“As the eldest daughter that was the first U.S.-born child to Salvadoran parents, I have always been aware of language, documentation, and how that impacts our lives,” explains Rosa Cándida. “I have also always been aware of God’s grace and movement in the midst of the challenges we faced.”

One of those challenges is that immigration status has the power to keep families separated for years or even decades. As clients and neighbors pursue lawful

**“GOD WANTS TO USE OUR
PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TO
BUILD GOD’S KINGDOM.”**

pathways for themselves and their family members, the church has an opportunity to demonstrate the love of God by creating a safe and welcoming space to provide support, explore options, and build community.

“It’s humbling to see people’s first reaction when they realize we are part of the church,” Rosa Cándida says. “They are shocked! It’s such a gift to look people in the eye and say yes, this church cares about helping your family apply for immigration relief. This church cares about you.”

“I have admired the resilience and the faith that many of our clients have shown, even when some of them don’t have the language for faith,” Rosa Cándida says. “They continue to point towards hope for a better future for their family members and loved ones. . .In my consultations, I have seen faith that moves mountains. I have seen faithfulness and peace from people who don’t always receive the benefit of the doubt. I have been transformed in my role here, I see it as a pastoral role, but I am so ministered to.” ●

**Names changed for safety*



The path to citizenship is not always clear, taking many years of diligence and work. Upon approval, citizenship provides stability and new possibilities.

UNITY + FRIENDSHIP IN NEPAL

Agape ministries and the church provides hope for teenagers in a quickly changing world.



STORY AND PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY NCM EURASIA

On a sweltering monsoon morning, the weekly worship service has just finished at the New Community Church of the Nazarene in Kathmandu. As the adults chat on the way to the exits, 36 teenagers spill into the tin-roofed hall. Most Christians in Nepal belong to the younger generation, which is a notable contrast to the average age of Christians in the West. But seeing many teens in a small congregation is striking, especially as several come from non-Christian households. They've been brought here by Agape.

Agape is led by 22-year-old Rohit Magar, who also teaches at a nearby school. After a rousing guitar chorus, he reminds everyone that tomorrow is the group's 10th anniversary. Agape was initially organized by Rohit and a few of his 12-to-15-year-old friends for fellowship and sports. The group would regularly chip in some rupees (Nepal's currency) to pay the hourly rate for a match at an indoor soccer court that was one of the only sporting spaces in the dense urban sprawl around Tikathali, the church's neighborhood.

However, that principle of raising common funds soon spread beyond futsal (indoor football) money.

"If someone in the group lacks something, we collect and give," explains Devna*, an upcoming young Agape leader.

In Tikathali, as in most of Kathmandu, middle-class families live elbow-to-elbow with neighbors who are landless and have no dependable jobs. School brings children in those families together—and now, so does Agape.

The teenagers chip in to help each other, ensuring none of them is without the essentials, especially school uniforms and supplies and timely payment of school fees. If someone gets sick, the rest will go to their house, pray for them, and provide other help as needed.

They also make sure no one is left out of the fun: swimming, Bible study, quizzing, music practice, trips out to green spaces, and picnics of home-cooked food taken up onto the Himalayan hillsides that tower above the smog of Tikathali.

“In our school, if there’s a trip, then ‘no money, no go.’ But that’s not the way in Agape,” grins 15-year-old Alina*.

The principle of leaving no one out attracts youth from all around the neighborhood, as does Agape’s spirit of generosity. Today Rohit reminds everyone that Bibek*, one group member, just passed his Class 8 exams with distinction, and they agreed to buy him a calculator to celebrate.

The costs of mutual support, fellowship, and fun sometimes go beyond what the teenagers alone are able to raise. Behind where the Agape teens are meeting this morning, four members of the New Community Church of the Nazarene count the weekly offering money from the just-finished service.

Some of those rupees will go to support this youth ministry. The church is fully committed to supporting Agape and its young leaders.

Ganga Mukhiya, Nepal’s district superintendent, is New Community’s primary pastor; he planted it 15 years ago. In a culture where topmost leaders can be expected to exert close control, he stands out for the freedom and encouragement he gives younger congregation leaders. That includes Rohit, whom Ganga met many years ago. Over the years, Ganga has provided support and mentoring to Rohit, both while launching Agape and in its continued growth.

“So many of these youth don’t connect with their parents, teachers, or the older generation of believers,” Ganga reflects. “But they do connect with each other. Agape gives them opportunities that no one else in their lives will support, and we want to support that as a church.”

The teenagers of Tikathali have grown up in a churn of social change. They were born during or immediately after a decade-long civil war between the Nepali government and Maoist rebels, which sent hundreds of thousands fleeing to the relative safety and economic opportunity of the Kathmandu Valley.

Before the conflict, the capital’s outer reaches were still primarily green fields, and its inner neighborhoods were full of houses with gardens; now, like Tikathali, most of the valley is a sea of concrete buildings spilling into every available gap.

Millions of Nepalis migrated abroad for work, building World Cup stadiums in Qatar, working in factories in Malaysia, or providing security services in fraught contexts like in Afghanistan.

War and migration frayed Nepal’s previously strong social fabric. In Kathmandu, many households now live in isolation from grandparents, cousins, and even people who speak the same local language, because Nepal has over 120 recognized languages.

The nuclear family model, consisting of only parents and children, can feel like it is lacking in true community to people who grew up in rich networks of extended family,

village, and ethnic groups that were all interconnected. Alcoholism, addiction, school dropout, and other symptoms of despair are ever-present. Teenagers inhabit a social world that their parents struggle to understand, in part because everyone’s world has changed so much, so fast.

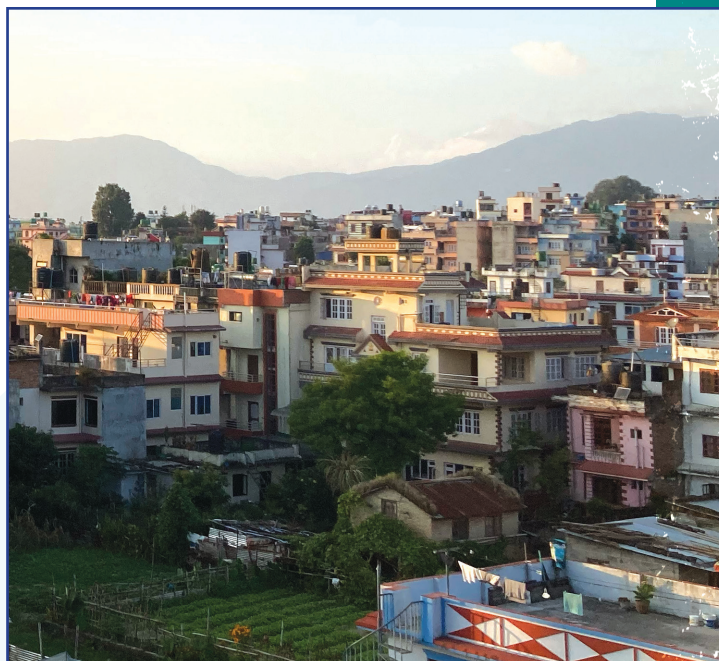
The Nazarene church in Nepal offers care and support beyond the traditional networks of family and ethnicity. Agape is a shining example of the difference it can make for a particularly hard-hit age group. The youth of Tikathali encourage each other to stay in school, do their homework, avoid smoking or drinking, and get along better with each other and their parents. When asked what they love about Agape, the immediate response is “unity”—something that is in short supply elsewhere in their lives.

Madau Shrestha, a 23-year-old Agape graduate, is one of the seven original founding members along with Rohit. Madau remembers that his non-Christian parents were happy for him to stick with the group because they saw him improving his habits and behavior, including the support he got to stay in school until graduation. Today, Madau is studying management while working part-time as an electrician. He and his mother have both become church members, and he has confidence and joy that would never have been part of his life without Agape.

“When I started Agape as a 12-year-old, my intent was just to play football,” Rohit laughs. “But it’s grown more and given me more than I could have imagined.” ●

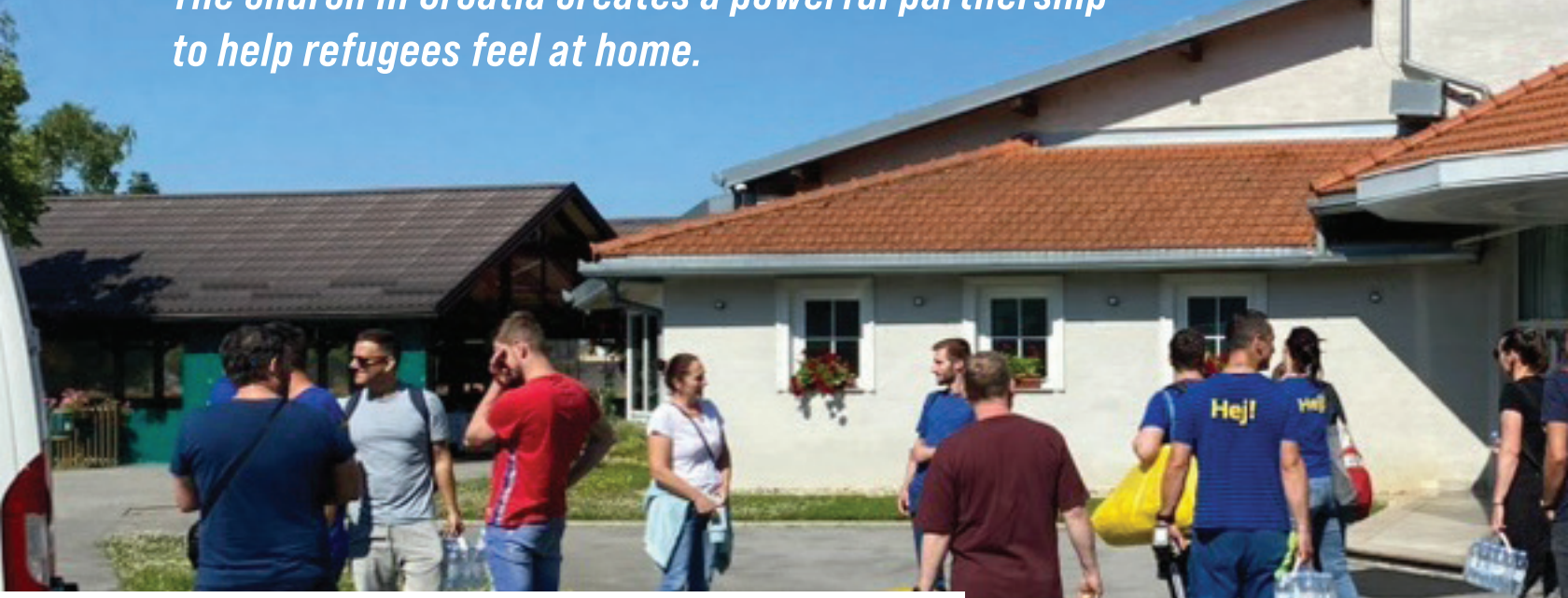
“IF SOMEONE IN THE GROUP LACKS SOMETHING, WE COLLECT AND GIVE.”

**Names are changed for safety*



MORE THAN A WAITING PLACE

The church in Croatia creates a powerful partnership to help refugees feel at home.



STORY AND PHOTOS BY CEZI GLENDENNING

Over the past 10 years, NCM Croatia, operating as the Croatian nonprofit “Djela Ljubavi” (Acts of Love), has been serving people who are refugees worldwide, including those from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and now Ukraine as well.

At the beginning of the war between Russia and Ukraine, after assessing the needs and resources that the Croatian government and other nongovernmental organizations were offering, the leaders of Djela Ljubavi decided to continue focusing on people seeking asylum from the Middle East. Already overlooked and marginalized, the new crisis of Ukrainian refugees was pushing their immigration processes even further behind. However, true to NCM’s desire in Croatia to “meet the unmet need,” the leaders of Djela Ljubavi kept their eyes open to see where they could help.

In October 2022, Cezi Glendenning, serving as the NCM country leader for the Church of the Nazarene in Croatia and the secretary of Djela Ljubavi, saw a post on

Facebook searching for specific items needed for people who are refugees from Ukraine. Cezi’s family donated some of the needed items, and through this point of contact, she met Yulia Lovrenovic. Yulia was a Russian businesswoman helping 150 Ukrainians at a refugee center near Zagreb, Croatia. Yulia needed more help and resources to help this community. The meeting with Yulia was followed by more meetings with the coordinators of the refugee center, two Ukrainian women, Yulia Kikteva and Victoria, who left Ukraine at the beginning of the war. The leaders of Djela Ljubavi agreed that it was time to get involved.

“Whenever we begin working with a new community, it is important for us to start conversations with a question that Jesus asked many times to the people he served: What do you want me to do for you?” said Cezi. “We see that a question like this pushes us to release power and enter into a partnership.”

Both Yulia and Victoria communicated that one of the critical needs was mental health support as well as activities



for children. As a result of these conversations, Djela Ljubavi began offering English classes and recreational activities for children and adults.

Later, Djela Ljubavi organized a concert at the refugee center with an ensemble from Mount Vernon University and prepared a picnic for some refugee neighbors at a park in Zagreb. Several women were also invited to attend

“IT BECAME CLEAR WE NEEDED TO THINK LONG-TERM. THIS SPACE NEEDED TO BE MORE THAN JUST A PLACE WHERE YOU WAIT TO GO HOME.”

a performance of Black Swan by a Ukrainian company at the main theater in Zagreb. Djela Ljubavi also organized summer camps and activities for teens and children.

As the partnership between refugee neighbors and NCM began to strengthen, Cezi noted some needs arising.

“We noticed that many of the rooms lacked appropriate furniture to meet the needs of larger families living in one room,” Cezi said. “This was an old hotel being used as a refugee center, but [it was] not equipped for it. The rooms had many mattresses on the floor, diaper boxes that served as containers for their clothes, and boxes that served as tables. The hallways were full of little tables — or boxes acting as tables — where black tea was being prepared. And when we asked what the biggest needs were, we learned that drying racks were an unseen, unmet need so that they had no way to dry their clothes, especially in the cold winter months,” she explained.

In November 2022, with the help of church members employed by IKEA, who themselves were refugees, Cezi asked if the store would give a discount on items they needed to purchase.

“IKEA in Croatia has been a great company to refugees,” explained Cezi. “They are one of the main job providers for refugees in the city, and they treat them with dignity and fairness. We thought they would be a good partner for us to work with.”

IKEA requested to meet with Martin Glendenning, Central Europe's NCM coordinator, and Djela Ljubavi's president. In that meeting, IKEA asked Djela Ljubavi to send a project proposal, and they would try to provide needed items at no cost.

The proposal was for resources that totaled about \$5,000 USD. After not receiving a response for several months, Martin contacted IKEA again. They apologized for the delay due to illness, holiday leave, and other circumstances but that they would reply soon.

Several more months went by, and the needs increased along with the realization that the war was not ending any time soon so the refugees would be staying longer than they had thought. Martin called

Volunteers assemble furniture so that those who left all of their belongings behind and flee for safety would have a comfortable place to find rest.





Volunteers from NCM, IKEA employees, and people who would be residing in the center worked together to assemble furniture.

again to offer to buy the needed items at a discount. The response this time was different. IKEA had been in contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) about this project, and they wanted to visit the refugee center.

After the visit, IKEA said that the project would not only be fully funded but asked that more items be added to the request.

“It became clear we needed to think long-term. This space needed to be more than just a place where you wait to go home. This place had to become a temporary home,” explained Cezi. “Both IKEA and UNHCR encouraged us to expand the list with everything we thought would be helpful to the families and to add items to common spaces, especially for kids and teens.”

The next day, Cezi and her team developed an exhaustive list.

“We spent eight hours on the IKEA website. This is the most shopping any of us has done in a day in our entire life! We added more items for the common

“THE PLACE WAS FILLED WITH JOY AND ACTIVITY, WITH CHILDREN LAUGHING AND TRYING TO HELP AS EVERYBODY CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING THAT SPACE A LITTLE MORE LIKE HOME.”

spaces, along with the essential and functional items for the rooms,” said Cezi. “We added flowers, picture frames, decorative pillows, paintings, and many other things that would allow the families to make their space feel a little more like home. We added

items for a teen’s corner, furniture for tea corners for elderly people, a children’s play area, new dining tables and chairs, and plants for the hallway.”

The project request amounted to about \$35,000 USD.

“Thinking they probably would not approve such a large increase in the project request, we color-coded the project so we could begin cutting back if needed,” explained Martin. “Instead of asking us to reduce the request, they suggested we add more outdoor furniture because they noticed there was not any during their visit.”

The final project proposal submitted was worth \$40,000 USD.

A few weeks later, UNHCR and IKEA granted all the items in the revised request. When they eventually delivered the shipment, there were extra items, including boxes of stuffed animals for the kids.

IKEA sent a team of 15 people who spent the entire day putting furniture together with the NCM team and people from the refugee center. The atmosphere was filled with joy and activity, with children laughing and trying to help as everybody contributed to making that space a little more like home.

“A highlight from the day was seeing two elderly women come and sit down in the dining area after everything was put together. They just sat, looked around, and smiled with tears in their eyes,” said Martin.

When all was said and done, it was powerful to see that a simple question like “What do you want me to do for you?” can unfold so much goodness, hope, and healing for many people. ●



When people have to flee with very little notice, children’s lives are disrupted. Gifts like these toys make a huge difference in helping children settle into a new home.



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NAZARENE
COMPASSIONATE
MINISTRIES



HOPE

IN THE

MIDST
OF TRAGEDY:

Nazarenes Respond to the Earthquake in Syria

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NABIL HABIBY

On February 6, 2023, at 4:17 a.m., the people of Aleppo, Syria, were fast asleep. Heavy rain and hail were rattling against the houses.

Pastor Oswald, a local Nazarene pastor, has been particularly thankful for the safety of his house lately. It has been a tough decade for the residents of Aleppo. Since March 2011, Syria has been in the throes of a violent civil war. More often than not, for Oswald and his family, sleep has been interrupted by the sounds of war.

So when the rattling grew louder, the pastor realized it was not just the rain anymore causing the disruption, and he gasped awake. They had grown used to the sounds of war, but this was different.

His wife jumped out of bed and ran toward their daughter. The closets, windows, and walls were shaking.

All three of them, still in pajamas, ran down the stairs in a rush. It felt as if all of Aleppo was running to the streets. The shouts of shocked citizens were drowned out by the rainstorm.

Hours later, around 7 a.m., his family huddled in the back of his brother-in-law's pick-up truck. They were safe and out of the range of any aftershocks but not from the pummeling rain. Oswald wished he had remembered to get his glasses as he squinted in the early light, starting to take in the destruction around him.

For the next week, his 9-year-old daughter was too afraid to re-enter their building at night. They had to stay up late at church and then carry her home when she fell asleep.

That Nazarene church became a hub for many of the congregation and community members impacted by this 7.8 magnitude earthquake—the deadliest for Syria and Turkey on record.

People whose homes were damaged slept in community and religious centers. Although the Nazarene church building was deemed at risk and couldn't immediately house people, the space could be used for worship and give out needed supplies such as food and water.

While the first few hours of the earthquake were sharp in Oswald's memory, the next several weeks passed in a blur of activity. Blankets and money arrived from the Nazarene churches in Lebanon and across the world.

The church members took blankets and other aid items to the Kurdish-controlled area of Sheikh Maksoud, where they handed them out in a local field. They then visited local hospitals as well as shelters and gave out hats, blankets, lanterns, and hot meals. Oswald said that the aid that streamed in lasted for two solid months.

After the initial hustle of emergency response in shelters and as people returned home, the church members started to do home visits. As they sat with community members who were still processing the earthquake's impact, they were met with unimaginable loss. One family was a group of four elderly sisters whose only brother had died in the earthquake. Then, a few days after the disaster, one of the sisters also passed away.

Another time, the church members found many Kurdish families living in an abandoned factory; they were given blankets and food and helped to the local aid camp.

The people who were refugees at the camp began to call it "the Nazarene camp" because the church was present almost daily to support people.

They cared for an orphaned child who would later begin to attend church. In fact, the church started experiencing an extraordinary growth in attendance. The church brought a battery to power fans and two

projection screens. They put out around 170 chairs, and still, people were standing during the service.

"The people come to hear the Word of the Lord even as we run out of aid [items]," said Pastor Oswald.

The church also held services in nearby Christian centers with larger rooms or courtyards. During this disaster, the support of various local and international partners continued to be a great encouragement to the local church.

Since the beginning of the earthquake, the people of Aleppo have had to rely on each other to get through this crisis.

Amal, a woman who attends the church, first met Pastor Oswald in one of his clinics. She had lost contact with him during the height of the war in Aleppo but found him again a few years ago when she began to attend church.

When the earthquake hit, Pastor Oswald visited Amal and offered to find her two sons and their respective families a place to sleep. The church has continued to help them with food coupons and medical care.

Amal praises God, saying, "I felt that the Lord Jesus sent the church to help me. Their help is not only financial but also [shares] a human touch and heartfelt care." ●



More than 8 million people were impacted by the earthquake in Syria.

Peace Prayer

of Saint Francis of Assisi

***Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace:***

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may
not so much seek to be consoled as
to console, to be understood as to
understand, to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are
pardoned, and it is in dying that
we are born to eternal life.*

Amen.

Go Deeper



READ

Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing By Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice

This book small book gives us a big vision for God's plan for holistic reconciliation for all God's creation. The focus of the book is biblical, transformative, holistic and global. They use stories from across the globe to demonstrate the important practice of Christian reconciliation and power it can have for overcoming all that separates us from God and from each other.



STUDY

Lectio 365 is a daily prayer app that provides morning and evening scripture references and prayer prompts. The app provides resources for discovering how we can love God through prayer and creativity, love one another through compassion and hospitality, and love the world through living out our faith.



WATCH

Poverty Inc. This documentary looks at efforts made in the developing world to alleviate poverty and bring community transformation. Drawing on over 200 interviews from 20 countries this film looks at the good that international charity organizations do, and it looks at the unintended consequences as well.



LISTEN

Sing Compassion: NCM at NYC 2023
Check out this playlist NCM put together for youth leaders and students over the summer at Nazarene Youth Conference 2023 in Tampa, FL. The songs featured themes of compassion, justice, restoration, and hope. It was shared with the desire that students would find new encouragement and motivation to live out Christ's compassion through listening.

Find it here: necm.org/nyc2023-playlist

Snapshot



“Radical servanthood challenges us, while attempting persistently to overcome poverty, hunger, illness, and any other form of human misery, to reveal the gentle presence of our compassionate God in the midst of our broken world.”

— Henri J.M. Nouwen,
**Compassion: A Reflection
on the Christian Life**

To read more about how churches are prioritizing community in Cote D'Ivoire, turn to page 12.



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info@ncm.org

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Will you give now for when they need it most?

By giving to NCM's Greater Compassion fund, you ensure compassionate action right away, no matter the crisis or need.

In Ukraine, Kyiv Church of the Nazarene supported families through the Acts of Mercy giveaway in January 2023.

GIVE BY DECEMBER 31 AT [NCM.ORG/YEAREND](https://ncm.org/yearend)