

NCM

MAGAZINE

> WHOLE-PERSON HEALTH CARE

A NEW INTEGRATED
HEALTH PROJECT

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100 YEARS OF MINISTRY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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STORIES FROM SPONSORSHIP

P. 25



2021 // 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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SEEKING

GOD'S KINGDOM

By Nell Becker Sweeden

“Seek first the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ instruction for his disciples is so simple. Yet, how we as humans carry this mission into the world makes all the difference. It could be said that to seek God’s reign and righteousness on earth is to follow the way of Jesus, who modeled such seeking and living for humankind. Jesus, our Lord and Savior, oddly came not as an all-powerful ruler but as a human baby.

As we live into the human incarnation of “God with us” in Jesus, we discover that God invites all of our humanness—mind, body, spirit. God invites us to follow Him in the midst of our needs and brokenness. And God doesn’t just ask for one aspect of our lives but for all of who we are and all that we do.

This issue of the magazine points to how members of the Body of Christ around the world are living into the way of Jesus with all that they are. They are seeking God’s kingdom with their mind, body, and spirit as well as through their actions—even the most basic and ordinary actions. In the following pages, you will read stories of followers of Christ who have

the passion to share their knowledge, skills, and convictions in order to point to God’s reign. Some welcome the stranger while others make connections for better access to health care resources. One family develops skills and fosters ownership within their community for growing healthier food, and still others mobilize to clean their neighborhood in the name of Jesus.

Often, such work goes unseen and unheard, like yeast slowly working through all the ingredients so that the dough may rise to make bread (Matthew 13:33). By itself, the yeast does not do much, but as it works with the other parts to make something greater, the bread becomes sustenance for life. To seek God’s kingdom and righteousness—indeed, to follow the way of Jesus—consists of countless small acts. Sometimes adjusting our daily activity the slightest bit helps open us the greatest amount to God’s coming kingdom.

Through the activation of countless small acts in the Body of Christ, God’s transformation of our communities materializes before our very eyes ... and builds hope and trust in the one true way. Through God’s people seeking after God’s ways first, the kingdom of God is made visible on this earth.

Lord, may we seek You first in all the small ways. ●

*But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.*

Matthew 6:33

CONNECTION POINTS

everyday compassion

Sometimes, developing a compassionate heart comes with practice. It can be easy to default into anger or frustration instead of seeing those around you as children of God. Prayerfully *practice* developing a Christ-centered response.

1

PRACTICE LISTENING.

James 1:19-20 says, “You must understand this, my beloved; let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.” For one day, make a note every time you could have listened to someone better. Then, choose one of those instances and try to truly listen next time.

2

PRACTICE EMPATHY.

Think of someone who is different than you. This could be someone with different life circumstances, different opinions, or something else. Take five minutes to consider their perspectives on the world. Imagine with as much detail as possible what their day might have looked like today.

3

PRACTICE ACTION.

A crucial piece of living compassionately is taking action. Now that you have practiced expanding your compassionate heart mentally, make a list of ways that you can practice by doing. Don’t get too big—try to make the list as attainable as possible. Then choose something off your list to do this week.

MIND

Body

Spirit

HEALTH CARE IN GUATEMALA
THAT CONSIDERS PEOPLE FIRST

Savings groups provide both financial and relational support.

global focus

By Chet Bush and NCM Communications
Photos by NCM Mesoamerica

In Guatemala, a new project is all about one thing: people. Specifically, the mental, physical, and spiritual health of people. Pastor Oscar Tut Sagui, 44, is well-acquainted with the project both personally and in his pastoral role.

“At the pastoral level, it has also helped me to serve in a holistic way, taking into account the basis of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ,” Sagui explains. “People were the most important thing for Him.”

In a typical year, the Evangelismo Comunitario de Salud (ECS), or Community Health Evangelism Project in English, trains pastors and lay people in holistic care. The concept is to address the spirit and the mind but also the body, an element that is particularly important in the marginalized Kekchi communities in Guatemala. There, due to numerous

factors—lack of funds, language barriers, and more—diseases often go untreated. Together with Nazarene churches in the area, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in Guatemala is seeking to change that. Professionals train community leaders in good health practices, and then the leaders spread the knowledge through the communities.

Like many other ministries, the community health project was derailed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the trainings and activities the organizers had planned at the beginning of 2020 weren’t possible with the health and safety precautions that were put in place.

Still, the large-scale public health crisis presented an opportunity. Cesar Juarez, the coordinator of the project, turned his attention to the more immediate

health and economic needs of Guatemalan pastors. By transitioning to virtual instructional events and educating individuals on fighting the spread of the virus, ECS modelled for leaders and the community how best to honor a fundamental mission of their project: community health.

Yesica Macz, 26, is a member of a new savings and agriculture group started through the ministry. While a savings group may not initially have a clear link to a health care project, the group creates a safety net for the members. With financial stability, they can purchase healthier food and are better prepared for health crisis.

“I feel blessed and grateful to God who gives me the opportunity to lead a group of women,” Macz says. “We trust the Lord to guide us to continue developing what we have learned.”

Those involved in the project are eager to resume training church and community leaders in skills that promote holistic health. As quarantine restrictions in the region are lifted, the year and a half of preparation means that they will be better equipped to implement the plan. ●

To read more about another community-based holistic health project in Africa, go to page 12.



Groups who attended one training also cleaned up the church grounds to promote good health.



The trainings help people practice good health habits they can continue at home.

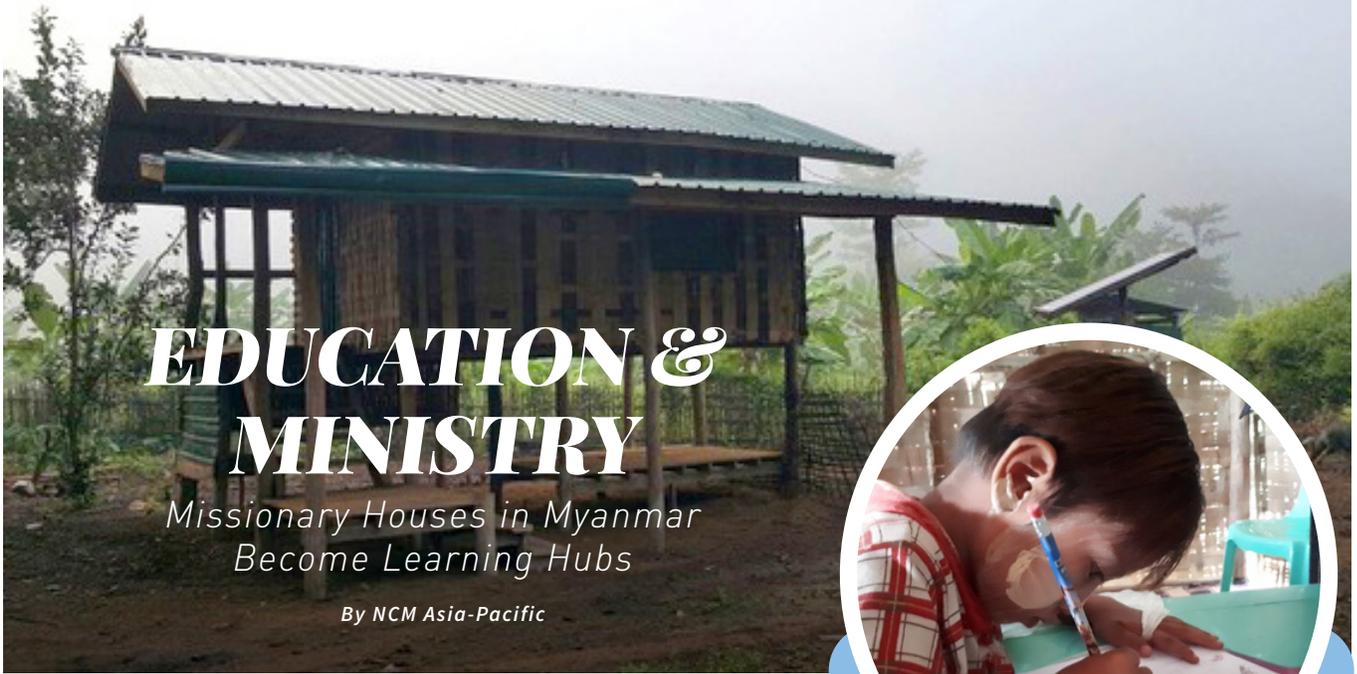


While training sessions were virtual during the pandemic, now church leaders can travel to rural areas.



The project is holistic and helps facilitate mental, physical, and spiritual health.

PHOTOS BY NCM ASIA-PACIFIC



EDUCATION & MINISTRY

Missionary Houses in Myanmar Become Learning Hubs

By NCM Asia-Pacific

In a remote corner of the northwestern part of Myanmar, a small, wooden house opened its door for many ministries of compassion.

“I am very glad to God because my family now has a home to live in [while] planting a church in the community where there is no church yet,” said Aung*, a local missionary sent by Myanmar’s Northwest District.

The remote communities in Myanmar do not build additional houses for rent; they construct houses only as needed. At first, it was impossible for Aung and his family to go to that village since they did not have a place to stay.

Now, as a new resident in his community, Aung walks around the villages and visits houses to

make friends. He also assists the community leaders with children’s education and school.

In fact, the new house will also provide a building space for an educational support center for the village’s children. The village is so remote that children typically cannot go to school, especially during the rainy season when the long walk on muddy roads becomes impossible. Now, Aung can teach them out of the home. It is typical to hear music or laughter coming from the house as children gather for music lessons, tutoring, and fellowship.

Aung’s prayer is that God will continue to use him to show compassion to his neighbors. ●

**Surname is removed for safety.*



THE CURRENT REALITY

It is important to note that missionary houses in Myanmar were purchased around the same time that the killing of thousands of people who were part of the Rohingya ethnic minority and the subsequent refugee crisis began to garner global attention. While the remote areas where the homes are located haven’t been as impacted by either the refugee crisis or the most recent political unrest that began in February of 2021, each of these stories is part of the current reality of the country.

Existing tensions also complicate relationships in the country and have pushed many people into poverty. Through the support of NCM and the expertise of local Nazarene churches, those in the country have been able to organize food distributions to support people for up to a month. They also have provided people with supplies that were in-demand during surges in COVID-19, including oxygen, personal protective equipment, and hand sanitizer.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE, GHANA, KENYA, LIBERIA, AND ZAMBIA

Since the 1980s, Côte d'Ivoire has technically had **TWO CAPITAL CITIES**: Abidjan and Yamoussoukro.

With seven national parks and a wide array of natural beauty, around **15 PERCENT** of Ghana is protected land.

Mount Kenya is the **SECOND-HIGHEST MOUNTAIN** in Africa (after Mount Kilimanjaro) and the highest in Kenya.

In 2006, Liberia became the first country in Africa to elect a **FEMALE PRESIDENT**.

In Zambia, Victoria Falls, which also stretches into Zimbabwe, is the largest curtain of water in the world at a towering **345 FEET** (108 meters) high and more than **5,604** feet (1,708 meters) wide.

Facts from Britannica and World Bank.

To read more about stories from these five countries, turn to page 12.

Share
Your
Story

We want to hear your stories of compassion!

ncm.org/share-your-story

Images *from* Haiti

Photos by David Campos

On August 14, 2021, a 7.2-magnitude earthquake shook the lower peninsula of Haiti. This region is isolated, and it is difficult to make sure holistic, local-guided aid gets where it needs to go. Though 15 Nazarene churches were destroyed and 10 were damaged, Nazarenes have still been serving the community and coordinating distributions of tents, tarps, and food staples. This immediate response is just the beginning. Later, holistic, long-term projects will help build resilience to both recover from this crisis and prepare for the next one.



After the earthquake, church leaders mobilized short-term supplies like tents right away.



The lingering effects of Hurricane Matthew (2016) on the area hit by the quake give insight into the challenges of recovery.



Some churches opened as shelters for those who couldn't stay at their homes after the quake.



The Cance Church, pictured here, was one of many Nazarene churches and buildings damaged.



Pastors worked with other Nazarene entities to help determine where aid was needed most.



SOMETHING MORE TO SHARE

**PASSIONATE VOLUNTEERS ARE AT THE HEART
OF A NEW INTEGRATED HEALTH PROJECT**

BY CALLIE STEVENS

In a large sanctuary at a Nazarene church in Kitui, Kenya, a dozen people sit in a circle amid patches of sunlight that come in through tall windows. It is the very beginning of a new project there, one where these volunteers will go out in their community to connect their neighbors with health care options that could save lives.

The volunteers are mostly women who are active members of the church, which also hosts a clinic, a primary school, and an orphanage. On that first day, members of the group shared their hopes for the project.

“Love motivates me,” one woman explained. “If I got to a home and show people love—[well], not everyone is loved.”

“The other thing is to have compassion to those who are sick,” another added. “I have something more I can share.”

“IF OUR COMMUNITY IS HEALTHY, YOU KILL POVERTY.”

Others were more specific about their motivation: “It would be to change the narrative that mothers should give birth at home, where their children die,” a woman shared.

These volunteers are all part of an integrated health care project, a name given to highlight the project’s holistic nature. It isn’t only about good health or access to health care. It is about maintaining that health through economic development, which enables people to buy healthier products and create a safety net in case of crises. It is about better sanitation facilities, which reduce the spread of intestinal diseases. It is about transforming a community by seeing it as a living, changing thing, just as humans are.

“One thing that excites me about this is that our community will be healthy,” said one of the men at the meeting. “If our community is healthy, you kill poverty.”



This volunteer in Kenya decided to join because she has seen the impact of clean, available water firsthand.



During the pandemic, food distributions like this one in Kenya helped people maintain good health.



Clean up projects help reduce the transmission of diseases and encourage community participation.

GOOD HEALTH, TOGETHER

The project in Kitui is one of 11 health alliances that have started over the last year and a half. All are part of an integrated community health project being pioneered in five countries in Africa: Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, and Zambia. The project works in the space where WASH—water, sanitation, and hygiene—overlaps with health care. Through alliances in each of these five countries, more than 5,000 households have been visited by community health volunteers.

Local Nazarene churches are vital to the success of the project, which is church-based and emphasizes the training and mobilization of local leadership. In addition to providing space for trainings and workshops, they are uniquely positioned to adopt the integrated projects. Churches are typically accustomed to thinking holistically, taking care of a person spiritually, mentally, physically, and emotionally. Furthermore, they nurture hope, communicating how valuable all people are to God.

Irene, 19, lives in Liberia with her husband and their three children. Her husband works at a palm oil plant to sustain the family, but it weighed on Irene that she couldn't contribute.

"At some point, I felt useless myself," she says.

The integrated health project in Irene's community also incorporates economic development with the idea that good health isn't sustainable without the means and safety nets to support it. Irene didn't have the chance to finish high school, and when she first heard about economic development classes for mothers, she said she was afraid to join because she wasn't skilled in reading or writing. After some encouragement, she did eventually join. There, she and the other women were taught marketable skills like soap making and baking as well as healthy living habits.

After completing the courses, Irene started a small business baking bread. She is not the only one—the whole community is changing through the skills training offered for mothers, who are then better able to spend time, effort, and money on health care for their families. When one isn't focused only on survival, there is more space for behavioral change. For Irene, her business has completely changed her perception of her self-worth.

"From these trainings, I have become more successful and independent," she says. "I no longer feel useless. Now I can take care of my own needs and even help my husband."

HEALTH VOLUNTEERS

In each of the five countries, the strength of the project is found in community health volunteers. These are individuals who give their time to be trained and equipped so they can act as links between clinics and people in nearby communities. Sometimes, the clinics that are closest to groups of communities are still many miles away. To travel that far by foot or to pay for transport is costly in both time and money.

The first step is to conduct educational sessions to introduce health volunteers to the community, creating space for everyone to become more comfortable sharing stories and welcoming volunteers into their homes. Then, later, the volunteers visit regularly to screen people for illnesses like malaria, give advice on treatment and care, and make referrals for services at the clinics where they have partnerships. Then, as the relationships progress, they are also able to evaluate behavioral



Some of the clinics in the program are run through Nazarene churches themselves. Others are partners.



risks to health and offer counseling to help foster change. These behaviors, which are typically related to sanitation and good cleaning practices, often stem out of a lack of knowledge; there might not be public service initiatives or school visitors teaching children good sanitation.

Because the community health volunteers make the journey from clinic to communities themselves, people have a connection to the clinic without necessarily having to regularly make the journey. The volunteers can provide information about health basics like when to get vaccinations, what services the clinics provide, or prenatal counseling.

Volunteers also facilitate workshops on topics like good sanitation practices, including good hand washing and latrine placement. That way, diseases are better contained before they start to spread. Evidence points to the fact that clean water, good sanitation, and enhanced hygiene globally could prevent the deaths of close to 300,000 children (UNICEF).

Access to community health volunteers is also helping to address HIV and AIDS. A strong stigma keeps many people from seeking the medical care they need, an action that could announce their condition to the community at large. So, they go without treatment. Having volunteers who can help connect people to clinics directly is helping.

Anne, 42, is a community health volunteer with one of the health alliances in Kenya. Her church already had a strong system in place to support clean water initiatives; taking the next step to integrate health care was natural.

“These activities have influenced my family, my community, and me a great deal,” she says. “I am grateful for the training that has made me a community health volunteer.”

After Anne’s older sister became pregnant as a high school student, their father vowed not to educate any of his other daughters. As an adult without an education, Anne had few opportunities open to her. After getting married, her husband left her and their four children behind in order to go and work outside of the country for two years. During that time, the Nazarene church and neighbors surrounded her, making sure she and the children had what they needed.

Once Anne’s children were older, she had more time to give back. She wanted to use that time to contribute to the community that helped her and was delighted to hear about the new integrated project through her church.

“I am delighted to be even of small assistance to my community,” she shares. “They stood by me when I needed them the most, and they still do.”

Community health volunteers also became integral in Lonbay’s story. When he became sick with a fever, he thought it would pass quickly. Then the 65-year-old kept getting worse until he couldn’t even eat or drink on his own. His children took him to a nearby clinic, then to a hospital, and eventually all the way to Liberia’s capital city, Monrovia.

“Everyone, including myself, gave up and concluded that I would not get well,” he says. “I told [my children] to bring me back home so I could die in peace. I had lost all hope.”

“THE PRESENCE OF THESE KIND SOCIAL WORKERS MADE ME FEEL LIKE I AM A HUMAN BEING.”

When he got home, he also stopped taking the rest of the medicine the hospital in Monrovia had provided. Community health volunteers from the Nazarene church heard Lonbay’s story and began to visit him. Every time they came, they brought healthy food and encouraged him to take his medicine. They provided the human touch Lonbay needed, acting as advocates on his behalf, visiting the local clinic with him and helping him with the medicine. Lonbay grew stronger, and now, months later, he is strong enough to walk to his palm farm and go to church.

This group of volunteers in Kenya shared that they dream of helping create a healthier community in love.



“The presence of these kind social workers made me feel like I am a human being,” Lonbay says. “I got encouraged to go to my home clinic once again, and this time, I was not alone.”

MORE TO SHARE

Many community health volunteers learned about the opportunity to join because they were inspired by the project or their local church. A thread throughout their stories is summed up in what one woman said in that first meeting in Kitui: “I have something more to share.”

Certainly, this is true of Ndepoaka in Ghana. At 42, she had spent her entire life farming, a trade she had learned from her mother. While her husband also works as a motor bike taxi driver, the rainy season each year makes roads impassable.

“So, during this time, we go through a lot of hardship because no money is coming in from anywhere,” Ndepoaka explains. “We mostly rely on the little food and money we have kept.”

It was during this difficult season that their youngest son, an infant, became sick with the measles. Ndepoaka felt she had no choice but to keep working on the farm so she could harvest a good crop. Plus, the family didn’t have a means to get to the clinic easily. She decided she would take him in to the clinic later, after the harvest, she thought. Luckily, community health volunteers visited her home around the same time. They took her and the boy to the clinic, where he was treated and recovered.

The health volunteers continued to visit Ndepoaka for health and maternal education. She learned quickly and noticed the change: her children were not sick nearly as often.

“I was really transformed on how I handle my children’s health,” she shares. “Now, I count myself as a volunteer for what this project has done for me and my son.”

Ndepoaka now travels miles on her bicycle to different communities to teach other mothers about maternal health—the importance of nursing, diet, and good hygiene. She has dreams for her children, especially her daughters. She dreams that all of them will finish high school and go to universities. “I don’t want them to come and farm like I am doing,” she says. “They don’t have to take from me like I took from my mother.” This is the wedge that will break the cycle of poverty.

As more and more people like Ndepoaka grow passionate about the things they have learned, so too will the project grow. That is the true power of caring for the body, mind, and spirit together: it unleashes the potential for other opportunities too. Some, like Irene, are learning that they aren’t useless after all. Others, like Anne and Ndepoaka, are so inspired that they are beginning to spread the word as well. With that kind of passion, the project can’t help but grow. ●



Volunteers can direct people to clinics like the Ron Farris Nazarene clinic in Côte d'Ivoire.



Each smaller project is holistic, addressing physical health through clean water, better sanitation, and more.



Clean water also helps reduce the prevalence of disease, helping communities be healthier overall.

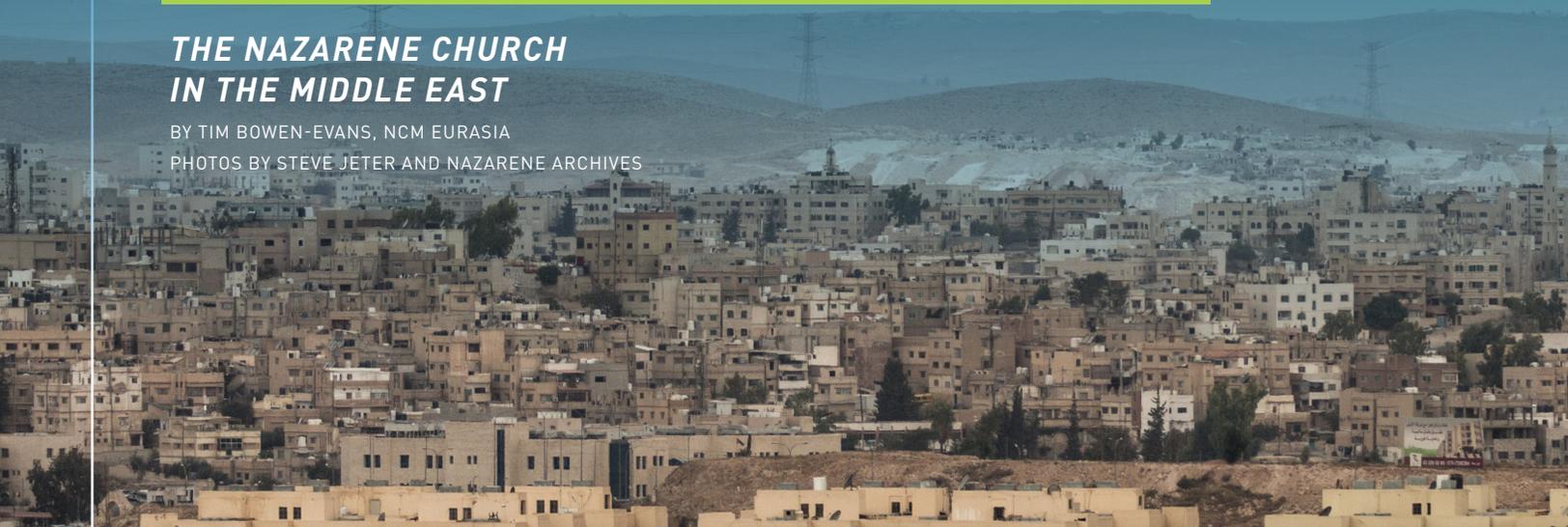
**“I NO
LONGER
FEEL
USELESS.”**

100 YEARS OF MINISTRY

THE NAZARENE CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY TIM BOWEN-EVANS, NCM EURASIA

PHOTOS BY STEVE JETER AND NAZARENE ARCHIVES



Don't move. If you move, they will kill you, a father told his young son, Hagop*, as he hid him from those who were chasing them. Hagop stayed still in the hiding place. The father and the rest of the family ran on, only to be tragically caught and killed. All alone, Hagop made his way to Syria, where he found safety and support.

This story happened 100 years ago, and these were Armenians, fleeing the genocide that was inflicted on the Armenian people in the early 1900s.

For the last 100 years, stories of conflict, persecution, and refugee crises have constituted part of the story of the modern Middle East. However, the past century is also a story of incredible courage, compassion, and love for one's neighbor. This year, 2021, marks the 100th anniversary of the Church of the Nazarene in the Middle East, after its beginnings in Palestine and Syria in 1921.

When asked whether compassion is part of the Nazarene identity in the Middle East, one pastor, Pastor Boulos, was clear. "Absolutely, this is our identity, 100 percent," he says.

"This is the heart of our mission, and I believe it is linked with the heart of Jesus," he continues. "In Matthew 25, [Jesus says], when I was hungry you fed me, when I am thirsty, you give me water, when I am in prison you come and visit me ... when you

do it for these people, you are doing it for me."

The very first Nazarene churches in the Middle East were comprised of refugees and those living in poverty, and the early ministry of the church consisted of food relief, care for orphans and vulnerable people, and education for children through Nazarene schools. Now, 100 years later, Nazarene churches continue this legacy.

"I believe this is the heart of Jesus: to see the compassionate ministry in every heart, every church, every servant, to serve people—especially those who are passing through a hard time," Boulos shares.

Boulos recalls how, during the first Gulf War in 1991, Iraqis were fleeing to Jordan as they had nowhere to stay. At that time, the Nazarene school opened its doors, and 30 families were given a classroom each as shelter. The church was a sanctuary in the truest sense of the word.

"To be frank, I am so proud," Boulos shares. "I am so happy to be part of the Kingdom of God through the Church of the Nazarene, because when I see pastors, they are doing the best with limited resources, just to serve and support those in need. I am really proud... the situation is really hard... Let us receive them. Let us serve their kids. Let us share our heart, our love, our resources with them. This gives me joy..."



ONE BODY, ONE SPIRIT

Among the many refugees who have fled Iraq, there are followers of John the Baptist—an ancient and often persecuted people group. Ayman, an older man who belongs to this group, explains the kinship that exists with Christians, referencing the familial connection between John and Jesus, who were cousins.

**“...THIS IS OUR IDENTITY,
100 PERCENT.”**

Because of this connection, a number of these families have benefited from the relief program at the church.

“The church is God’s home and the best and the most beautiful place where people can just come and sit,” Ayman says. “This is the place I can come and talk to God, pray for my family and my sons and my daughters, and to pray to Jesus.”

Naim, another follower of the John the Baptist, says that all of them are still suffering psychologically from the trauma they have experienced. Naim is a teacher, but as a refugee, he is not permitted to work. He talks

of how armed groups came and placed a sign on his gate telling them to flee. At first, they stayed put. But when people began to shoot at their home, they felt they had no choice but to leave. They left everything they owned behind. Yet Naim explains that, “... the pastor gave us hope. I listened to him more than once when my wife was listening online, and he is really giving us hope.”

The churches in the Middle East are full of stories of transformation. One young Iraqi woman fled the war with her family.

“They are down, they are afraid,” Boulos says of those living as refugees. “They cannot even walk on the street. All these things are in their mind, and they are isolated.”

The young woman was 18, pregnant, and without support. Then, she began to get involved in the youth group, and the youth loved her and supported her. After a few years, she has grown immensely in her faith. Now, she is a preacher. Boulos explains how her story began with fleeing but now she stands strong in her faith.

“When she stands on the platform, she is like a lion, full of boldness and charisma,” Boulos says.

In one Nazarene church, a woman named Anna leads the refugee work for children. Anna is a recent refugee herself. In fact, she comes from a family of refugees—Anna is the granddaughter of Hagop—the little boy who was hidden by his father a century ago. She too has her own story of fleeing violence and starting all over again in a new country.

“100 years ago, there was tragedy, but now we see the hope,” Boulos says. Reflecting on the present, he continues: “Right now, we see tragedy, but maybe after 100 years we will see the light is shining.”

THE CHURCH CANNOT STOP

When asked about the importance of continuing this work, Boulos explains that it is not something he can ignore. “I feel more responsibility; I cannot escape,” he says. “I cannot say I am finished ... because people are still refugees ... they have no resources, no work, no income. I cannot start a journey in a very strong way and in the middle stop and say, ‘it is finished.’”

Those at churches throughout the Middle East welcome people in love.





One of the first congregations at the Nazarene church in Jerusalem.

Some of the key supporters of this work are refugees who have benefited from the church programs and moved on to other countries. They want to give back. They say, *You supported us, now we want to support you.* Shadia is an older widow whom the church used to care for regularly.

Pastor Boulos explains some of Shadia's story, including how they used to pick her up by bus and deliver food packages to her. She came to the church to thank them.

"She gave 10 envelopes—this one for the church, this one for the volunteers, and the other eight envelopes for eight Iraqi refugee families," Boulos explains. "Shadia said, 'I want to stand with them because they are passing through a hard time.' This is amazing; they have turned from refugees to servants."

Compassion is in an integral part of the Nazarene identity in the Middle East, and so long as they are able, they will continue to help those who arrive in their

communities. Reflecting on God's provision, Boulos asserts, "When I see resources come, I say, Lord there is still ministry. You want us to feed them. I will not stop."

He shares how in Deuteronomy 10:18 it says, "[God] defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing." The Church of the Nazarene in the Middle East has been living this out for 100 years, and it will continue to do so with all the resources available.

"The situation is really hard," Boulos says. "Our church is open. Let us receive them." ●

Nazarene churches in the Middle East continue to serve vulnerable people through food relief, educational programs, counseling, language classes, and children's work. To join them in this effort please go to ncm.org/MiddleEast

**Names are changed for protection.*

"I BELIEVE THIS IS THE HEART OF JESUS: TO SEE THE COMPASSIONATE MINISTRY IN EVERY HEART ..."



The first Church of the Nazarene opened in Jerusalem in 1921.



In Syria, a Nazarene school (staff pictured) has long served students.



One of the earliest congregations gathers at a Nazarene church in Syria.



NAZARENE
COMPASSIONATE
MINISTRIES

**ISSA, LIKE MANY OTHER
11-YEAR-OLDS, LIKES TO PLAY.
SHE ALSO WANTS TO BE A
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LOAVES AND FISHES:

In Brazil, an aquaponics project nurtures both physical and spiritual gardens

BY NAYARA SILVA, NCM SOUTH AMERICA
PHOTOS BY ILANA ROCHELLY AND MARIANE FONSECA

In an arid, rural town in Brazil, fish are thriving in large circular tanks. Water bubbles through the pumps in their tank, which circulate the water out to rows of plants and back again. The process—aquaponics—means the plants have nutrients and the fish have food.

Dinho Reuben's family works directly on the aquaponics project. Dinho, his wife, Daguia, and their eldest daughter, Aline*, age 16, are responsible for maintaining the project in the small village of Serra do Meio. Their two younger children, ages 10 and 7, help out as well.

**“WITH A LITTLE WATER
AND A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE,
WE CAN DO A LOT.”**

Jobs are scarce in Serra do Meio, so people survive on agriculture. But there is a problem: there is not much land for cultivation. For this reason, most young people leave the community to seek better means of income. Going to university is something to which few aspire.

“It's a tragic thing for the future of these young people,” Dinho says.

Aquaponics combines hydroponics and aquaculture to produce soilless vegetables and aquatic organisms such as fish. The enriched water from the fish farm is used to irrigate the plants. The process provides the producers two sources of income: the sale of both fish and vegetables.

Even at Aline's young age, she is very knowledgeable about aquaponics. She describes how organic matter, like waste and scales from the fish, is transformed into nutrients for the plants.

“Aquaponics is a recirculating system in which water is never thrown away,” she explains.

The project started from scratch through the efforts of a group of local pastors and churches. Church members made themselves available to help and were able to finish the entire structure in order to start the project in 2017. The initiative for the project came from one of the pastors named John Hall.

“He launched the proposal in the church and then came to me and asked if he could implement it here in the local church,” Dinho says.

When the pastors came to ask if he would be involved, Dinho remembers saying, *Here I am, Lord!* Aline says the Lord called her family. “Wherever I call, you will go,” she recalls.

Aline has been involved since the beginning. At first, she helped out because it's what her family was doing. Then her interest began to grow when she learned more about the sustainability of the project.

“At school I always liked this type of project—sustainable projects,” she says. “I started to like it there; I started to see that it was a way to acquire a better future for me. So, thinking of the future, I went deeper and ended up falling in love with the project. I didn't know what I was going to do with my life. The project is something that worked very well. As they say: it's my thing!”

A FAMILY TRANSFORMED

In a way, the project is the result of the transformation of Dinho's family. He shares that his life before he met Jesus

was very sad; he had even attempted suicide. He lived on drinking, fighting with his family and traumatizing the children. Today, people see them as a united and transformed family.

“This is tremendous in our lives,” Dinho shares. “People might say to themselves: look, isn’t he the one that drank in the bars? And today you take care of vegetables and fish? It’s a gigantic transformation.”

The family’s conversion occurred after a community activity: the Natal Church of the Nazarene built them a house. Soon after, the Serra Church of the Nazarene in Meio was built, and Dinho was able to help in the construction.

“The transformation followed a process,” he says. “We took a liking to the work, not only the material work but the work of wanting to save lives. We were falling in love with wanting to help other people to live what we are living.”

Each day, the family was inspired to grow in faith to better share their powerful transformation through the gospel. They hope others will see the change in their family and will be inspired as well.

After witnessing the success of the aquaponics project, the community’s young people were inspired to explore new ways to earn money, too. For example, some planted gardens in their homes. Many young people are also looking to deepen their studies of aquaponics.

Whenever young people in the community need to learn about biology or chemistry, they use aquaponics as the basis for their schoolwork. Currently, a group of students is producing a documentary. The project

**“WE WERE FALLING IN LOVE
WITH WANTING TO HELP
OTHER PEOPLE TO LIVE
WHAT WE ARE LIVING.”**

also receives students from the Federal University of Rio Grande in the North as well as students from public and private schools in the region.

The objective of aquaponics in Serra do Meio is to show people that there are sustainable ways to maintain a living. Even in places without access to the water and land it would take for traditional agriculture, it is possible to produce fruits, vegetables, and even fish. And because the system is circular, there isn’t a risk of wasting water.

“With a little water and a little knowledge, we can do a lot,” Aline observes.

IMPROVING ACCESS

Each round has a growth period of six months, at the end of which the crops and fish are harvested. Currently, the family is producing tilapia, and they are experimenting with

a new breed, panga, that grows quickly and are well-adapted to aquaponics. It is not without challenges; if the electricity goes out, fish are lost. The family has lost some fish during the last three harvests, a problem they eventually hope to overcome.

Dinho reported that everyone, including children, participates in the harvest period. His youngest daughter, age 7, is the most excited for harvest time.

“There are many people from the community who even help with the harvest,” Aline agrees. “They help us by collecting and cleaning the fish. It is very gratifying, to see the acknowledgment of the community.”

Before the project, the community was unable to consume good quality fish, but today, fish consumption has become more accessible to the people.

Juliana, 16, is a resident of Serra do Meio whose whole family has become involved with the project; they go to get fresh vegetables twice a week.

“Since this is a community that is mostly low-income, the sale and donation of the fish help to improve nutrition,” she says.

Márcia, 17, agrees: “The project makes a healthier life possible, especially because it doesn’t have any pesticides or any kind of chemical products.”

The fish are sold to the community while vegetables are donated. Right now, the family grows lettuce, chives, kale, peppers, spearmint, basil, and peppermint, and they are in a testing phase for strawberries. The community is excited to purchase products since they know that the food is 100 percent organic and produced locally. While the family was initially concerned about theft, it hasn’t been a problem at all. In fact, the project has brought the community together even when things have not gone as planned. About 22 families benefit from the vegetables.



Many young people are becoming more interested in aquaponics.



“For a period, the church had no water due to a drum leak in the system,” Dinho says. “The neighbors saw the need and donated water from their cistern for us to

“THE PROJECT BECAME THE MODEL FOR OTHERS.”

put in the system. So, in a way, people who aren't even Christians embraced the cause. We consider these people with a lot of affection and serve them with a lot of love.”

THE KNOWLEDGE SPREADS

The aquaponics project is like a school. Both Dinho's family and the church community want others to learn how to develop this type of planting. Juliana talks about how the project brought transformation to the community, where rural growers desperately needed to increase their income.

Márcia says that the introduction of aquaponics here means the community has greater access to healthy food and skills training. “They can create this system at home, expand their income, and consequently have a better quality of life,” she says.

“In other words, the project became the model for others,” Márcia finishes.

Before starting the project, people had to travel nearly 4 miles (6 km) from Serra do Meio to the nearest town to buy vegetables. Earlier, people lacked a good understanding of healthy nutrition since there was no access to these types of vegetables.

“The community learned that organic is better,” Aline says.

Márcia is a young woman who has diabetes. She says the project made a big difference in her life. The fresh vegetables and protein have enabled her to eat healthier with her restricted diet. Previously, Márcia or her parents had to go to

the nearest town to buy vegetables, something they couldn't do regularly. Today, there is no shortage of vegetables in her house.

“These people were so used to a careless lifestyle, but now people are seeing that their previous lifestyle was not right,” Aline says.

The project brought life to the community. Aline, Juliana, and Márcia are three young people who dream of a great future—dreams that have been greatly impacted by the project.

“Today I'm thinking about going to college in aquaculture engineering to work precisely with this type of system, with aquatic systems and organisms,” Aline says.

“I always really liked studies more related to health, food ... and after aquaponics arrived, it only expanded my vision,” Juliana agrees.

“I like animals a lot ... I really hope to be a veterinarian, because in this community it's very difficult to have one in the region,” Márcia finishes. ●

**Children's names are changed for protection.*



SPONSORSHIP & BEYOND

A TESTIMONY FROM ZIMBABWE

BY SIMBARASHE KANENUNGO (NCM AFRICA)
PHOTO COURTESY OF NYASHA VERO



The Nazarene child sponsorship program in Africa has been impacting the lives of many children. Through their experiences in child sponsorship, many young people have completed their high school education. One example is Nyasha Vero, a recent graduate from Africa Nazarene University.

Vero lost her mother while in primary school. She moved in with her grandparents, who had just started a child development center at the church where her grandfather was pastor. An economic meltdown in Zimbabwe was making life extremely expensive; school fees were no exception. Vero started attending the Ruwa center, which supported her fees and education so she could finish primary school and go to high school. She was able to pay school fees and complete grade 12 with outstanding results.

Determined not to allow the challenges in the country to distract her from aiming high, Vero dreamed of going to university. Vero was accepted to Africa Nazarene University in Kenya to study accounting. Finances were still tight, and she did not know how it would work out. But she trusted that God would make a way.

And make a way He did—her Nazarene region was able to provide help out of funds allocated for sponsored children continuing their education. Vero also received support from her uncle and aunt to help fund the outstanding balance, and she earned scholarships from the university. Vero worked hard in her studies and was on the dean's list. She graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce and an outstanding grade-point average.

"I would recommend someone to child sponsorship because I am a testimony of child sponsorship," Vero

shares. "... I would like to say child sponsorship gave me hope, confidence, and resilience to tackle the challenges that life throws up."

She added that many children are forced to drop out when they are unable to pay their school fees from an early age or don't receive encouragement or support. Her experiences left her with a strong, positive impression about child sponsorship.

"Child sponsorship is also important as it helps us as a nation to fight poverty," she continues. "I believe when [people are] successful, they will not forget where they came from."

Vero also shares something for all children who want to continue their education, and encourages them to get involved in Nazarene holistic child development as well.

"Do not look down upon yourself or have that mentality of thinking what will other people say or think of you," she says. "Know your worth and never undermine yourself. Remind yourself every morning of who [you] want to be."

This sentiment is clear in the dreams Vero has for her own future, where she hopes to start a foundation to assist those who are in need and want to continue their education, "...not because I have plenty, but because I know how it feels to have nothing," she says.

After her graduation, the center Vero attended organized a celebration party. She was filled with joy in her speech to the children who participate currently. Vero is just one example of how child sponsorship is touching the lives of many young people and creating opportunities in life that someone never dreamt would come to pass. ●

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

A Q & A FROM TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

BY KENDUN AND LEIGH RAMPERSAD, AS TOLD TO NCM
PHOTO COURTESY OF LEIGH RAMPERSAD



Kendun and Leigh Rampersad live in the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean with their children, a 3-year-old son and a 1-year-old daughter. Before they got married, they had started sponsoring children separately. Now, the family of four sponsors four children.

How did you first become a sponsor?

Leigh: I attended Global [Nazarene Missions International] Convention in Indianapolis in June 2013 where I heard about the Nazarene child sponsorship program at one of the evening worship services. A youth pastor who was once a sponsored child shared his story of how the program impacted his life, and this inspired me to immediately sign up to sponsor a child.

Kendun: When Leigh returned from that convention, she shared with me that she had signed up to sponsor a child. I journeyed with her in communicating with her first sponsored child, and with her encouragement, [I am] learning of the impact of the program on a child's life, and witnessing her passion, I was inspired to get involved personally.

I signed up to sponsor a child in January 2014. But our journey in child sponsorship did not stop there. When we got married in 2014, we were both so happy building that relationship with [the children we sponsored] that we decided as soon as we were able to, we would sponsor another child. In January 2015, our financial situation improved by God's grace, and we decided to use this opportunity to sponsor two more children.

Do you have any specific memories to share?

Kendun: I remember once in a letter to one of [the children we sponsor], I asked how she was spending her time during the vacation period. In her response, she shared that, among other things, she was spending time with her boyfriend! Leigh and I laughed about it a bit later as I shared with her that I felt protective of the sponsored child and curious as to who this boy was!

How has sponsorship changed how you view compassion?

Leigh: I was encouraged by the correspondences I would have with [the first child I sponsored]. I recognized ... how much being a part of the child development center was helpful to his spiritual growth and his growth in other areas.

Sponsorship has definitely changed the way I view compassion. Growing up in church, the only way I knew how to be compassionate was through giving a food hamper to a vulnerable individual or family in our community.

Sponsorship has shown that compassion can be more than giving a hamper—that we can live compassion in a way that affects someone's holistic development. It's not just about meals but also regularly extending ourselves in other areas, as we see the needs, as we go. ●



A GLOBAL CHURCH IN OHIO

A TESTIMONY FROM THE
UNITED STATES

BY NCM COMMUNICATIONS

PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCINDA HUMPHREY

Lucinda Humphrey has always had two big pieces of her heart reserved for passions for children and missions. For the last six years, she has served as the Nazarene Missions International (NMI) president at her church in Peebles, Ohio, a position through which she promotes engagement with Nazarene missions around the world.

“The first year I tried to participate in everything that they did, and all that did is drive everyone crazy, including myself,” she laughs.

After that first year, Humphrey began to pray about the best ways to focus her involvement. One thing she learned about as NMI president was Nazarene child sponsorship through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries. It seemed clear to her that it was a good way to encourage church engagement with compassionate ministries.

“Of course, child sponsorship was definitely at the top of my list because I love children,” she explains.

Despite being a modestly-sized congregation,

members of the Peebles Church of the Nazarene have become very involved in child sponsorship. Together, the whole congregation and individual members sponsor 13 children, a number accounting for roughly a third of the congregation.

Humphrey, who has raised four daughters and three grandchildren, feels strongly that investing in children is part of a call to compassion. Encouraging children to grow in Christ, to learn about missions, and to live thoughtfully are all important pieces of the puzzle.

“I feel like we need to leave our kids with a legacy, and it has to be Jesus,” she explains. “And if they can show compassion to people—that’s the key.”

When it comes to what it means to live compassionately, the answer comes easily:

“To be Christ-like,” Humphrey says. “Isn’t that what He was? The most compassionate person who ever walked the face of the earth.”

“If we can help in any way, we need to do it,” she adds. ●

VOICES



IN WORD & IN DEED

The task of God's people is rooted in Christ's mission. Simply stated, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom in word and in deed, so the church must do the same. And as we have seen, Jesus particularly delighted in spreading the good news among the hurting, the weak, and the poor. Hence, it is not surprising that throughout history God's people have been commanded to follow their King's footsteps into places of brokenness. ...

We are not bringing Christ to poor communities. He has been active in these communities since the creation of the world, sustaining them, Hebrews 1:3 says, by His powerful Word. Hence, a significant part of working in poor communities involves discovering and appreciating what God has been doing there for a long time. ...

Reconciliation of relationships is the guiding compass for our poverty alleviation efforts, profoundly shaping both the goals that we pursue and the methods we use. ...

Think about it. If poverty alleviation is about reconciling relationships, then we do not have the power to alleviate poverty in either the materially poor or in ourselves. It is not something that we can manufacture through better techniques, improved methods, or better planning, for reconciliation is ultimately an act of God. Poverty alleviation occurs when the power of Christ's resurrection reconciles our key relationships through the transformation of both individual lives and local, national, and international systems.

Excerpts from When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor ... And Yourself by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert.

GO DEEPER



READ

In *Color: God's Intention for Diversity*, General Superintendent Carla Sunberg and Daniel Gomis, director of the Africa Region of the Church of the Nazarene, coauthored a collection of reflections to celebrate a Christian life filled with color.

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STUDY

The Lausanne Global Classroom invites people from all over the world to host Bible-based classes that examine global issues. The class on Creation Care considers the Christian call to stewardship.



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How is city design related to affirming dignity? In her TED Talk, Smruti Jukur Johari explores the simple concept of addressing poverty by developing better living options in large, urban slums *with* those who are living in the slums, not around them. Find her talk on [Ted.com](https://www.ted.com/talks/smruti-jukur-johari-what-if-the-poor-were-part-of-city-planning) under “What if the poor were part of city planning?”



LISTEN

The Resettled podcast delves into the nuances of resettlement through the stories of individuals living as refugees in Virginia in the United States. Stories include a chef opening an upscale Afghan restaurant, a man starting his career from scratch, and a storyteller going beyond two-dimensional stories. Available online or on most podcast apps.

SNAPSHOT



“It’s important to note that God does not obliterate the darkness; rather, God names it and limits it—puts boundaries on it. The boundary is the light.”

- Lisa Sharon Harper

To read about how volunteers are part of an integrated health project in five countries, turn to page 12.



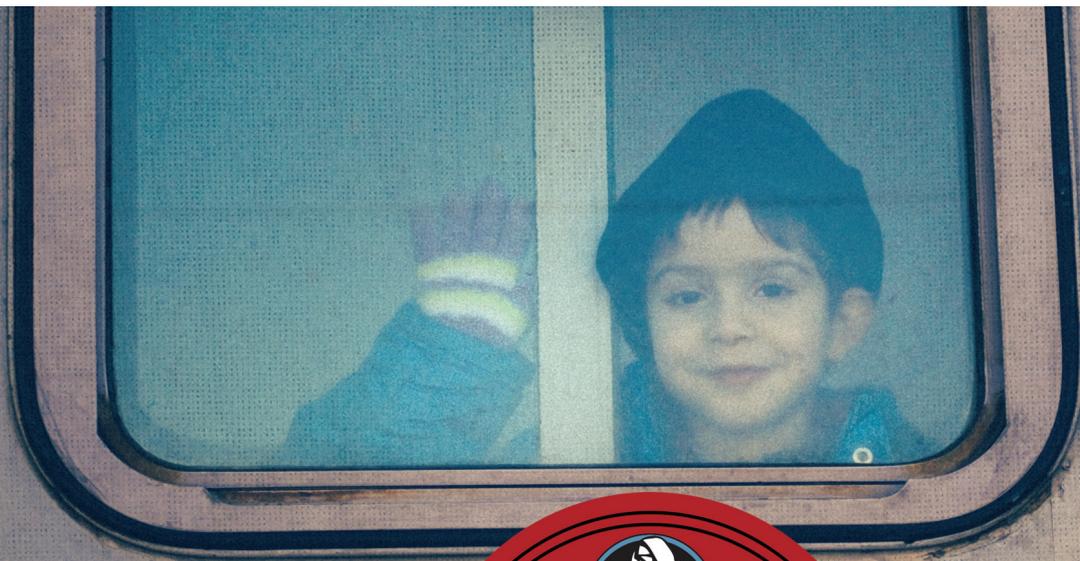
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