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A Revival at Hand



international
ministries



NORA & PIETER
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SUPPORT PLEDGED



EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST AND LIBERIA

Dear Family and Friends,

Last month I was in the Middle East and was surprised by the many Muslims who decided that they wanted become followers of Jesus, inspired by the witness of His children in this part of the world. On Sunday I visited a partner church. The pastor had studied on location where we had our European office, when we just started our ministry many years ago. We saw each other daily at that time, and I liked to visit his church and refresh the old ties (we had a fish-BBQ lunch).

I was staying at the local seminary that week, and traveled with the students in a 9-person van (packed with at least double the amount of people), to church. First upon arrival I was a little puzzled by the heavily armed soldiers guarding the church entrance. My second surprise was to observe an obvious number people in typical Muslim-dress entering the church. I was even more surprised when I later learned that the entire audience were Muslims who had decided to be, or were considering becoming followers of Jesus. I did not realize that there were 2 services in the church, and the second, (a much smaller congregation), was the 'original' church congregation.

A couple of days later while still in the Middle East, I visited another friend. I meet with him annually in overseas extension study program from a Canadian University, which we both attend. He is the chaplain at a partner school in the in middle of a Muslim part of town, with more than a thousand students (more than 90%), that are Muslims. The school leadership is proud of the fact, that none of the alumni have ever been linked to any terrorist activity. The chaplain teaches them from the Bible on a weekly basis year after year, and the parents are fully aware and happy with it (and pay for the education). I can not put too much in print about this, but please feel free to ask about it when we come to the US for our deputation year, starting this summer.

At the moment, I am writing you from Albania, where I am traveling with a (returning) volunteer who does business seminars, while I am strengthening/ refreshing our network of contacts (with denominational leaders in 6 different countries in just this one week), prior to our upcoming deputation year in the US. The class of about 17 people is busy, while I'm writing to you. This country, with mosques spread out over the countryside, was (and in some way still is) predominantly Muslim, with a post-war period of severe atheism prior to the 90s. There are some pockets of majority Roman Catholic areas, including the city of Lezha which is 85% Catholic.

I met with a pastor this morning, who came to faith through George, one of our American Baptist missionaries. We first met 12 years ago, when he was mentored and ordained as a young pastor, now he is the president of the church denomination in Albania, and he asks for volunteer help with their summer camps. He serves the Lord faithfully in his church, with different community outreaches. He told me that many Muslims in his area are coming to Christian churches for answers, and want to know what it means to follow Jesus.

I was wondering what would happen if they (Muslims) came to our home churches. Would the followers of Jesus (us) be so inspirational that these seeking Muslims would also become followers of Jesus? What would it take from our side to make them feel both welcome, and sense the essence of our faith? If it would be something else than the "national" or "Christian" flag behind the pulpit, what would it be, that makes the sacrificial love of Jesus tangible, and causes the Kingdom of God to expand and to be built? How do we reflect God's character as Children of God?

Tomorrow, I will be in Kosovo, where we cooperate with a person who became the first (still only) Christian in her Muslim family. Her father was deliberately killed and shot by

("Christian") Orthodox nationalists in the 1990s wars, leaving mom with 6 little daughters alone. She is now directing an NGO outreach for Christian community development. Compelled by the love of Christ, she is giving hope to the marginalized and forgotten. Our IM- volunteer will be doing workshops about starting small enterprises with the organization she directs, mainly in Muslim and Gypsy areas.

See next page for some more (background) information on Syria/ Jordan/ Lebanon/ Israel.

(Middle East with more back-ground information).

How come that hundreds, actually thousands of Syrian Muslims turn to Jesus for a new future? "Nobody wants them, they are the despised people, those refugees from Syria", is what I heard again and again while visiting the Middle East this winter. Violent interference in its neighbor's politics in the past decade and before, makes Syrians very unwelcome cross-border-guests now. Still, in desperation they are coming in great numbers, and great numbers are coming to the Lord.

Lebanon is a tiny little country that saw an estimated 1.5 million Syrian refugees added to their own population of less than 4 million, in the past two years. The country's history with the Palestinian refugees coming in waves starting in 1948 was supposed to be temporary. However the refugees are still living in prison-like camps enclosed and on the edge of survival for almost 70 years. This is a contributing source to continuing tensions in the Middle East. Tensions about which Christians in the West are often misinformed or lack proper information, likely due to biased media information about Israel, which is, after all, linked to geographical origins of our faith. Still the dynamics of the Kingdom, and rule of God, surpass these tensions and we witness hundred-fold fruit and harvest today.

The bad experience with refugees during most of our lifetime, causes the Lebanese government to refuse making provisions, or having any mercy on the fate of these newly arriving refugees, this time from the North and East from Syria, instead of from the South. This time there are no official refugee camps, like the UN-Syrian refugee camps in Jordan, but instead there are unrecognized 'settlements'; makeshift shelters, the occupying of empty structures, settling in garages, or in makeshift tents for which flooring is not allowed, not even in the muddy rainy season, like this month, (it was pouring rain for 6 days straight during my visit). Anyone wanting to come to Lebanon and who openly wants to help them will not receive a visa and can not enter the country.

For the first time in more than a century our partner churches in this Middle Eastern country are challenged in a special way to help. Their unique position is because, firstly almost nobody else feels inclined to help, or has pity on these new refugees. Additionally, through generations of presence, through the churches in villages and towns, our partners have gained respect and acceptance both in traditional Christian areas as well as in Muslim areas. This puts them in a unique position to help and live out Christian love for others, no pressure, no questions asked and no matter what.

This is what the ('despised') Syrian refugees notice: unconditional love, shelter, food, aid etc. from our partners (with help of Christians from our world-wide family). And many respond wanting to know more about their faith. When I visited a church on Sunday morning, the first service was packed with Syrians, some ladies in their black Muslim dresses, with headscarfs and faces covered in the front pews. Many already decided to follow Jesus, others wanting to follow Jesus too.

Years ago, I was at a denominational conference in Jordan, a well known local senior minister, who studied with me in Belgium (in the 80s), told the more than 70 attending pastors from various Middle Eastern nations, that he perceived a revival at hand in the Muslim world. Now retired, the Lord granted him to see thousands and thousands coming to the Lord, and becoming followers of Jesus. Now we had a supper together, and he explained more about his vision. Praise the Lord for the many new believers, and the witnesses of his Children in this part of the world.

Please pray for the Lords work through His people in the Middle East and other Muslim countries.

Please pray for our volunteers' contributions to the advance of His Kingdom.

Please pray for safe travels for us.

Please pray for the preparations for closing our house etc. anticipating our US-deputation year.

Please pray for the churches in the US, where we share about our ministry in the upcoming year.

Please consider volunteer service in Europe.

Please consider an electronic gift to participate in our ministry.

Greetings from Prague,

The Lord Bless You,

Pieter & Nora Kalkman

"Facilitating Life-Changing Mission Experiences"