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Message

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A Family that Prays Together
Miracles in the Middle East

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Sharing Christ's Love with Syrian Refugees

Letter from the
PRESIDENT



Why Compassion Matters

What does the gospel have to say about refugees fleeing the crossfires of civil war? How does it speak to those left destitute by the worst typhoon recorded in history?

After humbly watching ABWE supporters give more than \$400,000 to minister to Syrian refugees in the Middle East and to families and churches affected by the devastating typhoon that rocked the Philippines, I've been challenged to deeply consider these questions.

As a mission agency focused on church-planting, evangelism and discipleship, we've seen firsthand how compassion — in the form of practical and physical aid — creates opportunities for us to minister to brokenhearted and weary people who may not otherwise welcome us, or our message.

In the Middle East this reality is unfolding in real time. Syrian refugees tell our workers they were taught to fear Christians, but because we are showing them Christ's love in tangible ways, they are welcoming our workers into their homes, developing relationships and seeing the teachings of Jesus in action.

Through these acts of compassion, we are able to tell people, "Jesus is worth it, and because you are made in His image, so are you. It may seem like most of the world has forgotten you, but Jesus hasn't. You're worthy, because of Him."

That's the true message and power of compassion relief — that when it is rooted in the gospel, it helps the gospel take root.

Beyond our work in the Middle East, we are seeing the enduring effects of lives changed by compassion relief ministry in places like Haiti, long after the earthquake; Thailand, long after the tsunami; and more recently, in the Philippines.

This issue of *Message* is dedicated to telling the stories of ABWE's relief ministries and the life-changing impact we've seen when we provide people with practical compassion that is deeply rooted in the powerful message of Jesus.

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WHO IS THE ASSOCIATION OF BAPTISTS FOR WORLD EVANGELISM (ABWE)?

ABWE was founded in 1927 as an independent Baptist mission. The objectives of ABWE are to establish indigenous Baptist churches and to train national pastors and leaders. About 1,000 missionaries serve with ABWE to advance God's work in 60 countries around the world by sharing the story of hope, building communities of faith and serving the world with love.

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ON THE COVER:

A homeless refugee family tries to find safety in Syria.
Dreamtimes.com ©
Richard Harvey

ONLINE

- abwe.org/messageonline
- facebook.com/abweministries
- twitter.com/ABWE_Intl

CONNECTIONS

Ministry Snapshots from Around the World



In 2.5 days, five medical providers and 32 volunteers:

- Saw and shared the gospel with **2,173** patients
- Dispensed **8,400** medical prescriptions to treat a variety of diagnoses
- Extracted **330** teeth from 160 patients
- Gifted **208** eyeglasses
- Outfitted **62** homes with water purifiers
- Distributed **5 tons** of rice, beans and powdered milk
- Immunized **363** animals
- Gave **540** Bibles to people in the community
- Heard **160** professions of faith

NICARAGUA

BRAVELY GOING

“Straight up — we need you. Like the summer needs the rain. Like lobster needs butter. Like Nicaraguans need rice and beans. We need you.”

That was the pleading message missionary Traci Warner received from a fellow missionary in Nicaragua asking her to help with a medical clinic in the remote village of Pueblo Nuevo.

All travel to and from this hard-to-access region is by boat. And for Traci, the journey would include a rough 11-hour bus ride on a dirt and rock road, followed by a two-hour boat trip across a lake and up a river to the secluded village.

After considerable thought and prayer, Traci finally agreed to join a team of Nicaraguan medical professionals and a small group from Tennessee and Alabama on the trip.

For four nights, Traci and the team slept under mosquito nets on blow-up mattresses on the floor of a school classroom. They bucket-showered behind a black plastic curtain supported by four poles in the ground. But their sacrifices were worth it.

Every morning, they were inundated with lines of people who had traveled up to eight hours on foot, by boat and by horse in hopes of being seen at the medical clinic.

“As a nurse practitioner, I love meeting the physical needs of the people of Nicaragua. Jesus met physical needs,” said Traci. “But even with the best medical care, the reality is that 100 percent of my patients will die. Therefore, as Jesus did, I want to offer something more than just the physical healing. I want to share the love of Christ. I want to tell them how they can truly be healed.”

“I want to offer something more than just the physical healing. I want to share the love of Christ. I want to tell them how they can truly be healed.”



South Africa

**PHOTO: Wayne & Sue Royce, ABWE Missionaries
Mfuleni, Cape Town, South Africa**

Recently, missionaries Wayne and Sue Royce arrived at church to find their eager Sunday school children waiting to show them a cross they had made from part of an old fence. They said "their" church needed a cross. In the Xhosa culture, it is very unusual for the children to have any presence in church, but the Royces' Sunday school is changing that and their community is grateful. The cross now hangs in the shack that is temporarily home to their church, but the Royces say they will always keep it in their church — no matter where they are located.

MIDDLE EAST

A FAMILY MATTER

When we think of the mission field, we may think of faraway countries, foreign languages and different cultures. But for some, the mission field can be as close as their own home. This was true for Maysa*, a national partner of ABWE workers in the Middle East.

While her father was in the hospital, Maysa went to visit with her Muslim mother. As they talked, Maysa suddenly felt compelled to talk to her mother about her faith. Not knowing where to begin, she decided to open the conversation by saying, "Mom, you know someday dad might be unfaithful to you."

Her mother was shocked and asked her, "Why would you say that? Do you know something I don't? Is he having an affair?"

"No, I am not trying to tell you anything about Dad," Maysa said. "It is just a reality that sometimes we take things for granted without questioning whether they are true. It's kind of like that with Islam. How would you feel if you got



to the end of your life, and you discovered that you were wrong about Islam?"

Her mother recoiled and told Maysa to stop talking. But she pressed on.

"Mom, you can listen or not, but I need to say what is on my heart right now."

Then, Maysa shared a brief chronological explanation of the Bible. When she finished, she told her mother that she wanted to pray with her.

Surprisingly, her mother agreed. After a few minutes of praying, Maysa heard her mother

begin speaking. She was praying directly to Jesus. And then she did something that Maysa had only dreamed was possible. Her mother told Jesus she believed in Him.

Later, Maysa's mother said she felt like a warm light enveloped her, and then she felt Jesus tell her, "I will never be unfaithful to you." This experience, combined with the testimony of her daughter, was enough to convince her of the truth.

The very next night, Maysa's mother went to a fellowship meeting to learn more about her Savior.

CONNECTIONS

Ministry Snapshots from Around the World

WORLDWIDE

STUDENT MISSIONS TRIPS



Trip to East Asia

Dates: 5/28/14-7/2/14

Cost: US \$3,200

Duration: 5 Weeks

Join the ABWE East Asia team and get a chance to do kingdom work through ESL and sports ministry in a limited-access country.

College Trip to South Africa

Dates: 6/10/14-7/8/14

Cost: US \$3,300

Duration: 4 Weeks

Experience missions first-hand as you aid the ABWE South Africa team and learn the basics of missions, strategy, technology and national partnerships.

High School Trip to Jamaica

Dates: 6/12/14-6/22/14

Cost: US \$1,500

Duration: 10 Days

Come work with the ABWE Jamaica team where you will give devotions in public schools, work with an orphanage, do street evangelism, and lead boys and girls clubs in the city.

LEARNMORE about these trips at www.abwe.org/serve or by e-mailing students@abwe.org

MEXICO

FINDING A NEW DREAM

Javier came to the United States with his sights set on achieving the American dream. He wanted to find a good job that would provide for his wife and children in Mexico. But God had something bigger in mind.

Not long after arriving in America, Javier met Pastor Miguel who invited him to begin studying *The Story of Hope*, ABWE's 40-event chronological Bible study. Javier soaked up everything Pastor Miguel taught him, and eventually professed his faith in Jesus Christ.

As Pastor Miguel continued to teach and disciple him, Javier became more and more burdened for the salvation of his wife and children back in Mexico.

With tears in his eyes, he would often ask Pastor Miguel, "What should I do about my family?"

After much prayer, Javier realized he must leave his good-paying job and return to Mexico to share the gospel with his family and friends. This decision meant that he would probably not be able to return to the United States and that he may not be able to provide for his family in the way he had always dreamed. But he knew that what he could provide would be worth so much more than money.

Recently, Javier returned to Mexico. His wife and children have all accepted the Lord, and Javier has started a church in his home where he is sharing the story of hope with his neighbors.

LEARNMORE about *The Story of Hope* Bible study at www.goodsoul.org



© PHOTO BY ISTOCKPHOTO

South Africa



DID YOU KNOW?

ABWE has been ministering in South Africa since 1980 and currently has 37 missionaries serving there.

PHOTO: Glenn & Ame Barnett,
ABWE Missionaries in South Africa

Every week, this little girl gets up early and waits faithfully to be picked up to go to church.

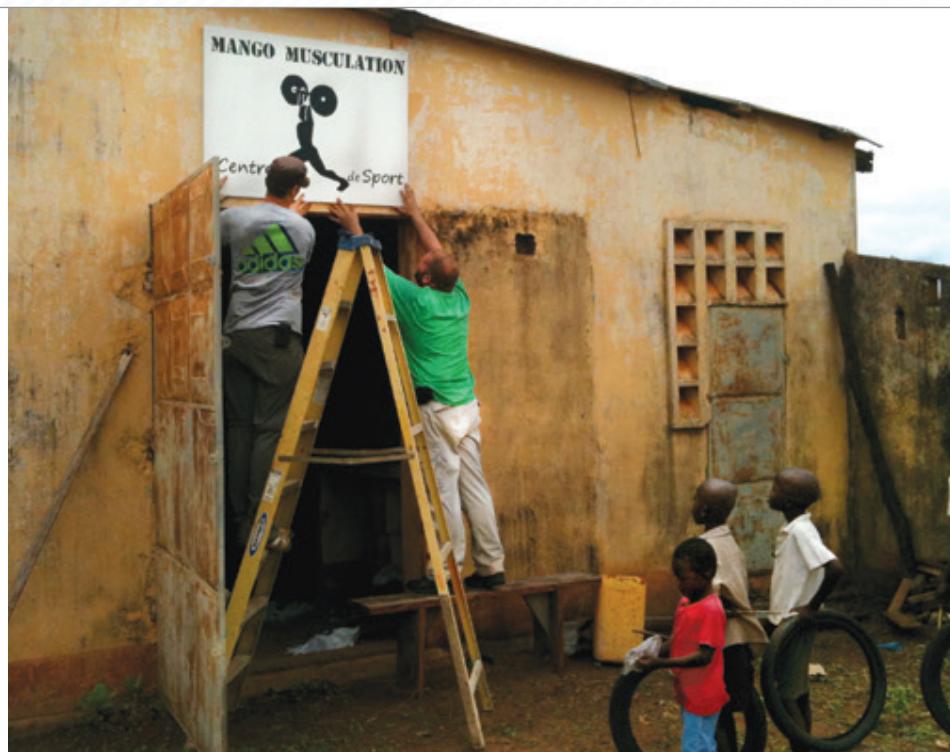
TOGO

DOING THE HEAVY LIFTING

An ABWE missionary is turning a workout into an outreach in West Africa. George* has been serving in Togo for the last five years, and while he made significant in-roads in his community, he struggled to reach younger Muslim men. Then, George noticed that they had a real interest in weightlifting. And just like that, a new ministry was born.

George set out to create a gym that would open new doors for the gospel. He bought weights, had benches made locally and hired an upholsterer to sew a punching bag filled with rice chaff. Then, he built pull-up bars, made concrete free weights, and purchased two Olympic weight benches and stationary bikes.

Finally, George rented an old slaughterhouse downtown, and in October, he opened the gym.



More than 700 people showed up for their first free day.

"They have never seen a gym before," said George. "It was fun to watch them try to bench press and kickbox."

In the first month, 240 people paid to work out for an hour, helping to fund the maintenance of the space and the ministry.

"Among Muslims it is so important to build friendships in order to build trust. These young men are excited about the gym and spending time with me," said George. "Already many of them have started coming to my home to greet me, which is a sign of real friendship in this culture."

*Name changed for security reasons.

GHANA

IF YOU WANT TO MAKE GOD LAUGH, TELL HIM YOUR PLANS

Many say the first lesson a missionary must learn is to be flexible. Vicki Greenfield, a missionary in Ghana, West Africa, was recently reminded of that lesson.

Vicki had planned to go to lunch with a fellow missionary, Barb Mathews, at a local restaurant with a great view. The two women loaded into Vicki's old clunker of a pickup truck and headed up the mountain, but the Lord had something else in mind.

As they were walking into the restaurant, a stranger approached them in the parking lot. He asked them if they spoke French, and they told him they didn't, so he struggled in broken English and the local language to communicate his situation. The man, Komla, told them he was traveling to the capital city of Ghana when his duffel bag was stolen. He was a type 1 diabetic and was now without his insulin, several hours from home and several hours from his destination. His sugar level was getting higher and higher, and he didn't have enough money to get more medicine.

Vicki was about to write it off as another scam, but Komla's request was different than the other stories she'd heard. When Komla asked for help, he didn't ask for the

whole cost of the medicine. He said he had some money, but not the full amount. He also offered to leave behind his backpack, his passport, and whatever else he had as collateral while he went to the pharmacy to buy the insulin. He even said he would inject it right in front of them so they would know that he wasn't trying to cheat them.

"The man was nearly in tears. I figured that he was either the world's greatest con-man or he was in serious need," said Vicki. "So we decided to abandon our lunch plans and take him to a hospital."

When they reached the hospital, the staff gave him an immediate injection. As his blood sugar levels evened out, Komla started talking about his wife and the twins they were expecting soon.

"Each and every day, I've got my to-do list ready, but sometimes the Lord has something different in mind," said Vicki. "Those changes in my plans often turn out to be the biggest blessings."

When Vicki and Barb finally parted with Komla, they gave him their lunch money to buy more insulin pens and some food. The two women headed home, with empty wallets and full hearts.



The
Nicaragua Ministry Center

Thank You

Because of your generosity, we've raised more than \$264,000 towards the expansion of the Nicaragua Ministry Center. The new multipurpose facility broke ground in February and is expected to be completed by August 2014.

LEGACIES

Honoring 35 Years of Ministry



Jon & Kathy Griffin

Candidate Class: 1978

Country Served In: Paraguay



As the son of missionary parents and the nephew of two missionary uncles, missions was in Jon's blood. Jon met Kathy while she was in college, and they connected over their passion to serve abroad. They were married in 1976, and two years later, they were appointed to an aviation ministry in Paraguay. However, during their first term on the field, their focus began to shift. They discovered their deep desire to develop a camp ministry, and God led them to purchase 80 acres of land in the interior town of Tobati.

In their second term, they switched from aviation to focus on building Camp Cabaju. Over the years, they built eight dormitories, a dining hall, an auditorium and two apartments for guest speakers. In addition to their camp ministry, they began the Bethel Baptist Church in their home in Tobati.

“When we first trust Christ, we have a zeal and desire for God and his Word. Never lose that.”

Never get over what God has done for you and that He has given you the privilege of giving His gospel to another nation. ”

The church grew as Kathy and Jon brought many people from outlying neighborhoods to attend services, and to ease the burden of travel and meet demand, the couple started new churches in two of those areas. Today Kathy and Jon's ministry in the interior of Paraguay continues to thrive and grow.

Favorite Memory from the Field:

“It is so precious to see someone trust Christ and watch them grow spiritually. For instance, I am close friends with a woman who had an abusive husband and a very difficult life. After her decision to follow Christ, her family rejected her. Recently, her husband

passed away. He rejected the Lord completely. At his funeral, she told me, ‘I know that he is lost and most of my family does not accept the gospel. It is hard for me, but I still choose Jesus.’ — *Kathy Griffin*

Advice to New Missionaries:

“Go with longevity in mind! Missions shouldn't just be the preparation or stepping stone to some ‘greater’ position. Stay as long as the Lord allows, but start with a ‘growing-old-on-the-field’ mindset. Many times results come only after 20 years or more of sowing!” —*Jon Griffin*

LEGACIES

Honoring 35 Years of Ministry



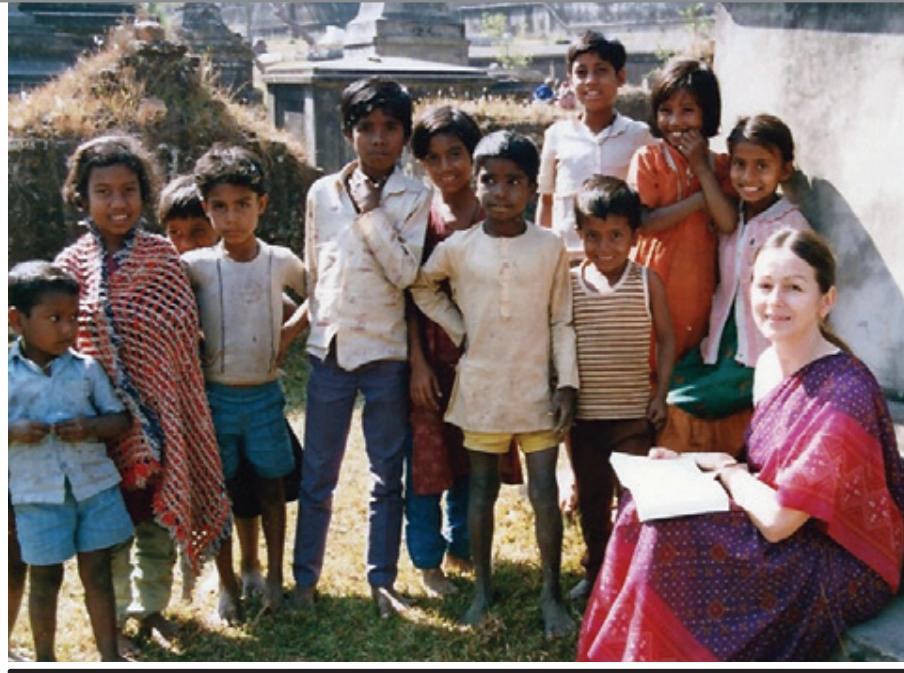
Larry & Nancy Allen

Candidate Class: 1977

Countries Served In: South Asia
and the Philippines

Nancy grew up in a loving Christian family and was in her first year of teaching when she met Larry. Larry grew up in a broken home with unbelieving parents, but fortunately, Larry still went to church. Drawn together by their faith, Larry and Nancy were married in 1972, and in 1974, Larry began working on a Master of Divinity degree. Through interactions with an ABWE medical missionary, the couple felt pulled toward missions in South Asia.

In 1980, Larry and Nancy began their work in South Asia where they developed skills that would shape their 35-year-long ministry of teaching and training others to be powerful witnesses for Christ. During their years on the field, the Allens worked with faithful local partners to plant two churches.



In 1995, Larry earned a Doctor of Missiology degree with a focus on internship training in missions. That same year, the Allens transferred to the Philippines to work at Faith Academy in the city of Manila. For about seven years, Larry and Nancy worked with the school and did training in churches.

In 2003, they returned to South Asia where they developed new ways to teach the Bible for church planters and leaders.

Favorite Memory from the Field:

“Our first term was a fun memory. We learned how to plant a church with great community leaders, learning the culture from them and sharing the gospel side-by-side. Our children were also very much a part of this exciting ministry — sitting cross-legged on the floor with new believers and growing along with them.”

Ministry-Shaping Story:

“I will never forget when a co-worker and I went to have a Bible study in a large residential area. As we headed home after the study, a group of young men surrounded us and demanded that we leave and never come back. They threw questions at me, like, ‘Who gave you permission to come here?’ They made it clear that Christians were not welcome in their area. We left wondering if we should ever go back, and we were leery when a man approached us just before we reached home. Amazingly, he begged us to come back to the neighborhood, saying, ‘We want the tracts and Bibles you have been giving us.’ We did go back, and God blessed us with many opportunities to share the gospel.” — Larry Allen

Advice to New Missionaries:

“Let God lead you.”



Larry & Jane Parks

Candidate Class: 1973

Country Served In: Spain

Larry and Jane met in college, and from the start of their relationship, they talked about God's plan for them.

While Larry completed two master's degrees at seminary, he wrote a thesis where he discovered that Spain was no longer banning missionaries. This research ignited Larry and Jane's interest in the city of Toledo, which is the seat of the Roman Catholic Church in Spain.

In 1977, they moved to Spain to focus on a new church plant. Spain was known as "the graveyard for mission work" because of the difficulties of the work and lack of longevity among missionaries, but the Parks have made it their home for the last 35 years. During that time, Jane has worked countless hours with children, youth, and women's Bible studies, and Larry has planted and pastored the

church in Toledo and developed mission points within the province.

Favorite Memory from the Field:

"Early in our ministry, there were those who preached or knew the language better, but one day, a Spanish brother came to us saying, 'Be encouraged, we see your faith and love. God is your power. That is all that matters.' It reminded us that God uses His resources for the good of His work around the world, and we must always remember to whom the work belongs."

Ministry-Shaping Story:

"When God called us to Toledo, Spain, we didn't know if we would see a church planted in our lifetime. This task reminded me of a story I once heard about a man who was asked by God to push a giant rock. The man pushed on the rock day after day,

but it never budged. The man began to wonder why God gave him an impossible task.

One day, God stopped to check on the man and the man began to cry. When the Lord asked why, the man replied, 'Lord, I have failed. I have not moved the rock.' With a gentle smile, the Lord responded, 'I never asked you to move the rock. I only asked you to push, which you have faithfully done. Consider how you have grown and been strengthened. Think of those who saw your faithfulness and were encouraged to take on hard tasks in my name. Thank you, my servant. Now, I will move the rock.' —Jane Parks

Advice to New Missionaries:

"While leadership styles differ among missionaries, **make no mistake, God has uniquely prepared us all.**"





Photography by Jim Latzko, AC Acosta and Ben Horton

To Save a Princess

A Father's **Love** Knows No Bounds

By Paul Luce and Jim Latzko

The two words spoken by Nonoy Perito's daughter were enough to make him travel 100 miles during one of the fiercest storms ever recorded.

"I'm scared," Princess Perito whispered into the phone as she sat trembling in her boarding house near her college.

Nonoy, a leader at an ABWE-affiliated church, prayed God would shelter his daughter as 170 mile-per-hour winds and a 17-foot storm surge from Typhoon Haiyan pounded the Philippines. Then, shortly after hanging up the phone, he climbed into his car.

Nonoy had experienced several typhoons, but the destruction Haiyan brought to his island nation was beyond anything he had seen before. Nonoy drove south for five hours as day turned to night, but when he was just 10 miles from his daughter's school, his progress jolted to a halt. The road was completely blocked by debris. Unwilling to turn back, Nonoy decided to travel the final stretch on foot.

With nothing but the LED light on his cell phone to guide him, he pressed on, singing "The Lord's our Rock/In Him we hide/A shelter in the time of storm." ▶

Nonoy Perito stands with his daughter Princess.





Like many of the small Philippine towns in Eastern and Southern Samar, the damage created by 170mph winds coupled with a massive storm surge has left millions in need of aid and shelter.

He waded through deep floodwaters and passed bodies of victims that lined both sides of the road. When his path became unpassable, Nonoy climbed on fallen rooftops, praying the exposed nails would not pierce his feet.

Around midnight, Nonoy finally reached a mall where many evacuated residents had sought refuge from the storm and the flooding. He frantically called out for his daughter and searched through parking lots filled with sleeping people. But Princess was nowhere to be found.

“God, help me find my child!” he cried. ▶



**“God, help me
find my child!”**



With increasing panic, Nonoy walked to Princess' boarding house, but he was crestfallen when he saw it was destroyed. Then, he saw a nearby house that was damaged, but still standing. In desperation, he knocked on the door.

Miraculously, Princess opened the door. She threw her arms around her father. Together, they shed tears of joy that God sheltered them from the storm.

While they eventually made it home, their journey, like millions of other Filipinos, is far from over. Typhoon Haiyan left nearly 1 million people homeless and claimed the lives of more than 6,200.

Recently, Nonoy and Princess met with ABWE missionaries Ben Horton and Jim Latzko, as well as other national pastors, to plan relief efforts during the country's long road to recovery. With the help of more than \$322,000 in donated relief funds from ABWE supporters, the team has started delivering food, water, supplies, building materials, and the hope of Jesus Christ to victims in the areas affected by the typhoon.

While destruction is all around, hope is stronger. Our ministry teams are partnering with local church leaders to help Filipino families rebuild and find safety in Christ.



* Combined donations to ABWE Foundation and ABWE Canada

PHILIPPINES

On November 8, 2013, millions of lives were changed forever when Typhoon Haiyan crashed into the Philippines. It was the strongest storm ever recorded at landfall with one of the fastest wind speeds. More than 14 million Filipinos felt its impact, with over 4 million people displaced and 6,200 killed. The Leyte Gulf, now as smooth as glass, delivered a 17-foot storm surge that swept through and gutted this town in Southern Samar. While the story has faded from the headlines, ABWE and our partners are continuing to rebuild and bring hope to people in this heartbreakin time.







Emelia, ABWE missionary Jim Latzko's neighbor, tells how she and her daughters survived the storm by climbing to the top of the wall of a neighboring Baptist church. They clung there until the storm finally passed. Afterwards, she was amazed to be alive and thanked God for saving her life.



RELIEF HIGHLIGHTS

30% ↑

attendance increase at churches in Eastern Visayas, Philippines, as a result of showing Christ's love in tangible ways after the storm.

**\$322,000
RAISED***

THANKS to our generous donors, ABWE has raised and distributed \$322,000 to help those affected by Typhoon Haiyan, which has been used to:



Deliver food & water

Provide survival supplies, like tarps for shelter



Give counseling to storm victims



Repair church facilities

After driving 680 miles, ABWE missionary Ben Horton lowers a crate of relief supplies for the Can-Avid Baptist church and the surrounding communities in Eastern Samar.

LEARN MORE about how to aid recovery in the Philippines.
www.abwe.org/give/projects/philippine-typhoon-relief

PICKING UP THE PIECES

Sharing Christ's Love in Tangible Ways with Syrian Refugees



By Ingela Hartman

Editor's note: All names have been changed for security reasons.

Thirteen years ago, a plane flew across a clear blue sky and crashed into the World Trade Center.

Word quickly spread and millions of Americans turned on the news just as the second plane hit the twin towers. An hour later, the country watched helplessly as the towers fell from the skyline — shaking the island of Manhattan and the entire nation.

This act of terrorism brought grief and confusion, which quickly gave way to fear and panic. Many people demanded action. Most of America believed that retaliation was the answer. But Brock and Sarah Snow didn't agree.

"Unlike many Americans, I believed the answer wasn't in fighting back, but in the hope and peace offered by Jesus Christ," said Brock.

Brock and Sarah first felt God calling them to serve internationally when they were in high school, and after September 11, Brock began reading more about Islam and life in the Arab world. Then one day in 2004, they clearly heard their call when an ABWE spokesperson came to their church. He talked about a new team they were starting in the Middle East and said they needed people. People just like the Snows.

Today, Brock and Sarah are two of 15 ABWE workers ministering to Syrian refugees. Each one has their own story and journey to the Middle East, but they all have one thing in common: when others only saw the things that separate us, they saw the hope of Who can unite us.

The Seeds of Unrest

Syria has struggled with peace since European powers' artificially drew its borders after the First World War, forcing together a jumble of diverse religious and ethnic groups. The country finally came under the rule of the al-Assad family after a 1970 coup. Despite being Alawite, a Shiite Muslim offshoot that makes up just 12 percent of Syria's population, the al-Assads have maintained power for more than four decades.

In 2011, their rule was tested when the Arab Spring stirred up rebellion in countries throughout the region that, like Syria, were experiencing high unemployment, corruption and political repression under dictatorial leaders. Syria's unrest ignited in March 2011 after a group of teenagers were arrested for writing political graffiti in the city of Daraa. Violence broke out and Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, sent security forces in to quell protesters. Dozens were killed.

Enraged demonstrators demanded Bashar leave office, like Egypt's and Tunisia's leaders had already done. Bashar refused and sent thousands of troops to stop anti-government street protests. However, his tactics only fortified the opposition against him, and armed civilians quickly organized into rebel groups. For the last three years, the conflict has spread throughout the country and become a full-fledged civil war between al-Assad's regime and an armed resistance.

"When the war started, there was a tremendous threat to our home and our lives. Every night while we tried to sleep, we could hear shooting and bombing all around us," says Um Ahmad, a widowed mother of five whom ABWE workers John and Holly Myers have been helping for the past 10 months. She and her teenage daughter both wear traditional hijabs as they sit on a thin

"I now have hope that my family's life will continue to get better."





mattress in her family's small, bare-walled apartment. "Finally, some people in our neighborhood helped us escape at night, and as soon as we left, our house was bombed and burned down."

It is estimated that more than 120,000 Syrians have been killed and millions more have fled their homes as a result of the war. Today, there are more than 2.5 million registered Syrian refugees living in other countries. The United Nations, however, predicts that is only about one-third of the total people affected by the conflict. Worse still, those numbers are growing every day, creating refugee camps the size of cities, where hundreds of thousands struggle to scrape by on relief aid.

"For a year and a half, we were refugees inside Syria, moving from place to place. Guys in the street threatened to rape my girls. We weren't safe," says Um Ahmad whose husband died of cancer, leaving her and her family without support or protection. She eventually took her family to a neighboring country that was offering asylum for refugees. They lived in a refugee camp for a month, but recently moved to a nearby city. They had hoped to find more opportunities, but with high rent costs and little work, they are still completely reliant on the help they receive from aid organizations.

Dreamstime.com | © Richard Harvey

"When we moved to this apartment, it was completely empty. We didn't bring clothes or anything, just us. But I heard about a church offering help. That was new for me. The church came and supplied everything we needed for our house. We thank God for all that we received from the church. The emotional support I received helped me to feel accepted and come out of the depression and loneliness I was feeling," Um Ahmad says.

Despite all she has been through, her brown eyes have light in them. "I now have hope that my life and my family's life will continue to get better."

Finding Relief

For the last 12 months, John and Holly have been working with refugees, just like Um Ahmad, in a desert town near the border. Abuse and trauma is commonplace here. The Myers befriended a man who had been chained and tortured for 19 days in Syria before being released and fleeing the country. They met a six-year-old boy who pulled up his shirt to reveal two bullet wounds in his abdomen.

While these hurting families have found protection from the war in neighboring countries, they haven't found much else. In the Myers' border town, the population



has tripled over the last three years — further straining the area's already limited resources. Many refugees came with nothing but the clothes on their backs and are heavily dependent on international aid.

"They're just living where they can afford to stay," said Holly. "People throw a tarp over an unfinished or broken down house and live in that. There are some who are in regular apartments, but they have little or no furniture. Many are just living in tents with nothing to keep out the cold nights that can dip down into the 30s."



ABWE, through the contributions of generous supporters, sent more than \$120,000 dollars to the region last year to provide refugees with basic necessities, like food, heaters, clothing and education. These small offerings in a sea of desperation have made a huge impact. One older Muslim man was brought to tears when the Myers brought him a gas heater. He said, with some difficulty, that he was extremely grateful for the aid Christians were giving him and his family.

"Showing the love of Christ in practical ways has opened doors to share the story of hope."

John says he is thankful that people are seeing the love they have for them, but building relationships with these wounded people who were taught not to trust Americans and Christians is a slow process. The Myers have invested months in simply spending time with refugee families and caring for them. This has been the key to forming friendships that allow them to share the root of their kindness.

"Showing the love of Christ in practical ways has opened doors to share the story of hope — doors that would never have been opened were it not for this horrible tragedy," said Holly. "They are sensing the love we have for them and our genuine desire to get to know them and care for them. We have been told, 'I would not have let you in my home before, but because you're bringing us this assistance, because you're praying for us, and because you're spending time with us, we know you care.'"





According to UNICEF, more than 1.2 million Syrian children are living as refugees in Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt and other North African countries.

A Lost Generation

Along with helping to meet basic survival needs, the Myers are also addressing another major concern: education.

According to the United Nation's refugee agency, seven out of 10 refugee children in Jordan, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, and Egypt are not in school. While some public schools do allow refugees, most are already bursting at the seams. The few Syrian children fortunate enough to enroll in school still face obstacles, like discrimination, curriculum and language differences, lack of transportation and their families' need for them to help make money. In total, nearly 3 million Syrian children have been forced to quit their education since fighting broke out in 2011, destroying classrooms and forcing thousands of families

to flee the country. As a result, the British government's Department for International Development says there is a threat of an entire generation becoming lost.

"Some of these kids have been out of school for three years," said Holly. "That's one of the biggest needs here."

To address this need and help build in-roads in their communities, the Myers have partnered with local churches to start two informal schools for refugee children. Three days a week, 80 kindergarten-through-fourth-grade students come to learn math, science and two languages from passionate local Christians.

"The children are eager to learn and the parents are thrilled to see them making academic progress once again," said John.

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UNHCR/G. Gubaeva

Fighting to Provide

But even with the hope found in education, families are still struggling. There is just not enough money to sustain this vast out-of-work population. And work is hard to come by, as thousands of refugees continue to flood into neighboring countries with already high unemployment rates. Countries' governments favor giving the few available jobs to citizens, forcing refugees, like Eyman Kazmi, to take off-the-books jobs that pay a fraction of what a national would make.

Eyman works 10 hours a day, six days a week to earn a little over \$200 a month, which doesn't even cover the rent for his family's small apartment. He lives in fear that he won't be able to provide shelter for his wife and two children — let alone put food on the table, provide clothing, and cover his family's medical expenses. As a non-citizen, he accepts whatever pay he can get, knowing his employer could easily replace him with someone else equally desperate for income. The strain shows in his eyes and is echoed by thousands of other families in the same predicament.



"There's no way of saying how long this war will last. Even if it ended tomorrow, so much of the country has been completely destroyed," said Holly. "Homes have been decimated. Infrastructure is completely wiped out. Hospitals. Schools. Public services. There's no way to say how long it will be until these people can return to their homes or if they even have homes to return to."

For this reason, our workers are trying to plan for a better future. They are looking at possibly developing employment strategies and long-term business opportunities for refugees. But these plans are in their infancy and the needs are immediate and ongoing.



As winter pushed in, refugee families fought to keep warm as humanitarian workers struggled to keep up with rising needs.

"The media attention is no longer here, but Syrians are still going through this crisis," said Holly. "It's easy to forget because it's not in the forefront of the news anymore. But the need is just as desperate now as it was three years ago."

Opening Doors

One ABWE partner serving in another neighboring country has stepped up to help meet these immediate needs by assembling a network of local churches to bring aid to refugees in one of the poorest regions of his country. Committed teams of local believers have volunteered to spend five days a week going door-to-door and tent-to-tent capturing families' needs, taking down their information and praying with them. With the support of the local church, ABWE, and other organizations, they have supplied more than 400 families with heaters, blankets, food and an opportunity to hear the gospel.

Recently, one relief team went to visit a community of refugees they had been working in for a few months. At first

glance, the area just looked like a cluster of abandoned buildings, but as their familiar car came to a stop, people began to emerge from cracks and crevices. They stared at the car with watchful and attentive eyes.

"Look, everyone's watching because they recognize this car," a team member said.

Once they got out, a man pulled back a plastic sheet covering the entry to their shelter and motioned for them to come inside. They obeyed and stepped into a dark, cold room. The smell of mildew hung thick in the air of the cramped one-room dwelling. Winter winds forced their way in through gaping holes haphazardly covered by shabby blankets. In one corner, a lone bulb strained to light the room, and in another corner, a four-year-old boy struggled to keep warm next to the heater that the team had given to them a few weeks earlier.

The team took a seat on a carpet that covered two-thirds of the floor and watched as a steady stream of dark figures wordlessly entered. While the silence may have made

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a blind man think the room was empty, it was completely filled with men, women and children who had heard about the team's aid.

Breaking the silence, a team member named Samir explained who they were and what the project was about. Samir said they were Christians who love Jesus and that they represented many Christians involved in this aid effort.

The people listened intently, and when he finished, Samir opened the conversation to let the refugees express their needs. "It seems that life is very difficult for you here, what do you think?"

Immediately, the mood in the room relaxed, and one of the men spoke up.

"No, it is not difficult," he replied. "No one is trying to kill us here."

This man was not the dissenting optimist of the group. His answer was met with approving nods around the room.

But once this positive view was stated, they admitted that life wasn't perfect. People began discussing lack of work, high rent by local landlords exploiting the refugees, limited access to medical care and the need for shoes and diapers.

"No one sees us. But you did. You cared and gave us this heater. Without this we would have nothing," one man said, pointing to the lone heater in the corner.

"No one sees us. But you did."

After more discussion, Samir asked the refugees what they thought the main obstacle to peace in Syria was. He expected a political and complicated answer, but one man simply said, "We do not forgive or forget."

Others nodded in agreement, and Samir saw an opening.

"Do you know what Christmas is about?" Samir asked. Most people averted eyes and some shrugged their shoulders. "Christmas is about peace."

The room sat up.

"Jesus was born to take your sin and give you peace with God. Jesus died for this and forgiveness is a free gift for all those who repent and love Jesus. When we know God has forgiven us for our wrongs, we know we can forgive others, and we can be at peace." Over the next few hours, Samir and his team discussed and answered questions.

This is how doors are slowly opening all over this hard-to-reach part of the world — kindness leading to meaningful conversation. Showing, once again, that God truly does work all things for good. ■

LEARN MORE about how you can help show Christ's love by providing relief and hope to Syrian refugees at www.abwe.org/give/projects/syria-refugee-relief





Make *Hope* a Priority

Nothing is more important than sharing the story of hope. That's why, when you name ABWE in your will or trust, you're taking a simple — yet life altering — step toward serving the world with love.



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Contact Kevin Kurtz, Director of Planned Giving, for your free planning guide to learn how to help ABWE touch more lives with the gospel while ensuring your family's future will be protected.

800.921.2293 | Kevin.Kurtz@abwe.org



In Canada, contact:

David Green, Planned Giving Representative
1.877.690.1009 | planned.giving@abwe.ca

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SYRIAN REFUGEES

As of February, there were **2,491,000 registered refugees** in Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and North Africa, but the actual number is much higher, as many refugees are afraid to register for fear of retaliation on loved ones left behind and the conditions inside refugee camps.



Understanding the Numbers

25% of people in Lebanon are Syrian refugees.

That's the equivalent of **78 million** refugees coming to the United States.

6.5 million
have fled their homes,
but remain in Syria

9.3 million
Syrians need
humanitarian
assistance

Source:UNHCR

ABWE IS PROVIDING HELP

15 ABWE workers are ministering to Syrian refugees in **3** countries

\$120,000 has been raised to provide education and relief aid to the refugees.

RELIEF AID INCLUDES:



BEDDING

Foam mattresses, pillows and blankets



STOVE

Two-burner stoves with propane tanks



CLOTHING

Shirts, pants, coats and shoes



FOOD & WATER

Rice, sugar, flour, oil, tea, canned meat, noodles, salt, powdered milk and water



INFORMAL SCHOOLING

Started 2 primary schools in local churches that teach 87 refugee children



BIBLE

Providing refugees with Bibles translated into their local language

1 in every 5 schools

in Syria cannot be used because they have been damaged, destroyed or are sheltering internally displaced families.

Since 2011, nearly **3 million children** from Syria have been forced to quit their education.

Syria boasted a primary school attendance rate of **97%** before the conflict, but the civil war caused attendance to plummet as low as **6%** in some areas.

Source:UNHCR

OPENING DOORS

Building relationships with refugees and unlocking doors to share the gospel

FORMING NETWORKS

Partnering with and assisting local churches and believers to reach refugees in the Middle East

A close-up photograph of a young boy with light brown hair and numerous freckles on his face. He is resting his chin on his right hand, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. In the background, a person's hands are visible, holding the boy's hands, suggesting a family unit.

—A Family that —
Prays Together

By an ABWE Worker in the Middle East

A few nights before we were to return to the Middle East after our furlough, our oldest son came out of his room with very red and swollen eyes.

Jake* had been crying about returning to the field and told us that he didn't want to go back. In just a couple of days, he was going to have to say goodbye to lots of family and friends, and it was heart wrenching for an 11-year-old.

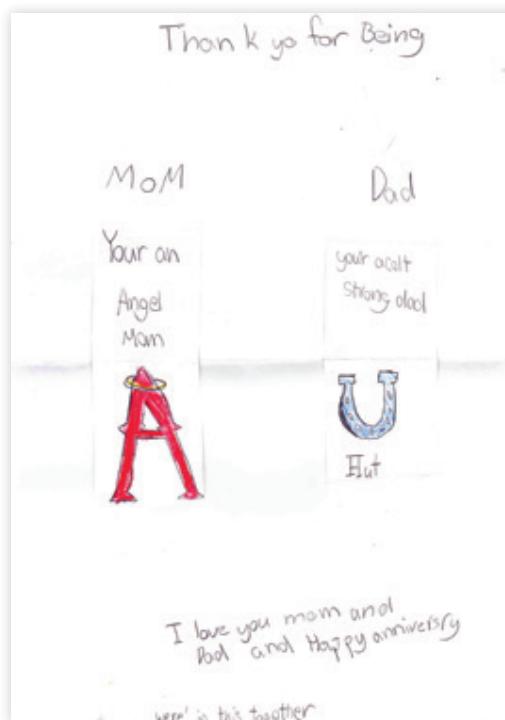
It was another parenting moment where we had no idea what to do or say. There really is no instruction manual for raising kids, especially when you add in the unique challenges of being a family in international ministry. So, I started doing what I always try to do when faced with a situation that seems beyond me. I started to pray.

We hugged for a long time as I prayed for wisdom to care for and lead this young heart to truth and grace. Then, trying to balance an empathetic ear with my desire to steer him to truth, I told him he was allowed to feel the way he felt, but I asked him to remember the importance of the mission to which God had called us. Finally, I reminded him, "Son, we are in this together."

Jake seemed contented and comforted by that thought, and he went back to bed and slept soundly the rest of the night.

The next day my wife and I celebrated our 15th anniversary. Jake seemed fine, but disappeared for a while during the day. Slightly concerned about how he was doing, we went to check on him. He appeared moments later holding a card he had made for our anniversary. The front

of the card had a drawing of a man and woman linking arms with the words, "I love you." Inside, he created a pop-up that said, "Mom, you're an angel," with a drawing of the Los Angeles Angels logo. On the other half, he'd written, "Dad, you're Colts strong," with a drawing of the Indianapolis Colts logo — our favorite teams. At the bottom of the card, he wrote, "We're in this together!"



I cannot tell you how significant that card was for me at that moment. It was as if God was speaking directly to me, encouraging me about going back to the Middle East, and letting me know that our kids were going to be okay. Because we — as God's children — are truly in this together.

* Name changed for security reasons.



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Miracles in the Middle East

By Jack Shiflett

Not many people can say they feel blessed to have met a terrorist, but I can.

As a young radical Muslim, Zafir's* mind and heart were consumed with nationalism, hate and murder. Just like his father and uncle before him, Zafir became a terrorist whose sole drive was to overthrow the government that kept his people from reclaiming their national homeland and restoring their sacred identity. This led him to a training camp where he could perfect the techniques of terror.

In addition to training their bodies, the camp had a small library of books to train their minds. It included an ancient book that reinforced their people's legacy and proved they were once a great civilization. These people were descendants of the Medes and the book was the Bible.

Zafir began to read it. As he did, something began stirring inside of him. Not patriotism, but something more akin to soul hunger. It spoke to a nagging absence, a deep desire for something beautiful that he couldn't identify. All he knew for sure was this book had power.

He was moved to a camp in another country to begin suicide-bomber training — and the book was there too. Every chance Zafir got, he would find the library and read. He kept reading until his camp disbanded after his commander was killed. Zafir returned to his home country and searched until he found one of the very few existing churches. Believers there welcomed him and led him to Christ.

I met Zafir several years after his journey to truth began. Today, he is a faithful church planter who is helping people escape the hatred and vengeance he remembers all too well.

This former terrorist is living proof of the transforming power of the gospel. Even when he was beaten for his faith, he did not retaliate. In a revenge culture, Zafir is living out Jesus' teaching of "love your enemy" with great power and it's opening doors for the gospel.

The beauty of Christ's church offering love and forgiveness in this tumultuous region is the most vivid display of God's glory I have ever seen. Nationals and missionaries alike are living out the power of the gospel. I have witnessed faith in face of fear. I have seen normal North American Christians become extraordinary servants of Christ. I have seen people from all walks of life and backgrounds plunge into the chaotic Muslim world on a rescue mission. It is humbling, challenging and beautiful to behold. And it beckons us to do more.



Since joining ABWE in 1981, Jack & Cheryl Shiflett have served as church planters in Spain, Regional Administrators for Western Europe, Area Directors for Europe and the Middle East, and most recently, Regional Administrators for North Africa and the Middle East.

SPOTLIGHT



Beautiful Faces

More than 40 percent of Togo's population is under the age of 14. Beautiful, smiling faces of kids of all ages greet you around every corner and you can't help but smile back. The staggering and heartbreaking truth is that many of these kids will never grow up because health conditions are so horrendous here. And sadly, many of these children and their families are without eternal hope. So, we build relationships. Through radio and healthcare outreach ministries, ABWE is sharing the hope of Christ in West Africa."



Andy & Amanda Justison, along with their three children, are pre-field missionaries called to Mango, Togo. Andy will be using his degree in broadcasting to help establish Hope Radio, and Amanda will use her skills as a registered nurse at the Hospital of Hope which is scheduled to open in January 2015.

LEARN MORE
about the Justison's
ministry in West Africa at
www.andyjustison.com

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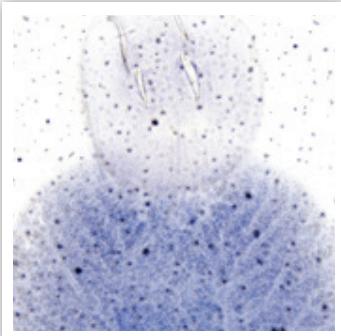
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