

SIMNOW

February 2026

Amazing Grace

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith
and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God
not by works, so that no one can boast".
Ephesians 2:8-9*

Breaking through the Darkness
Abdu's Story

Bathtub Baptism Brings Joy
in North Africa

When Fulani Hear the Call
of the True Shepherd

Stories from North Africa

Christmas in Central Asia

Planting Hope in Quebec's
New Generation

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A Message from Russell Wolf, Executive Director SIM Canada

While reading the draft submissions for this edition of SIMNOW magazine, the hymn Amazing Grace began playing on my phone. These two words summarize the content within its pages...AMAZING GRACE!

It's this AMAZING GRACE that shines so beautifully in the fourth chapter of John when Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well. Knowing the woman's past, Jesus still offers her living water. After accepting Jesus as her Savior, the woman could not keep from telling others what she had just experienced... the love of Jesus. As described in John 4:28, *'Then the woman left her water jar, went into town, and told the people'*. And then in John 4:39, we see the fruit, *'Now many Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of what the woman said when she testified...'*

What you are about to read has this kind of beauty and grace. We do not know how God is going to use the 11-year-old boy, the young woman baptized in a bathtub, or the woman healed of tuberculosis. Within the pages of this issue, you will discover a common theme of transformation. As you read on, prayerfully consider this question... How will God's

AMAZING GRACE shine though these people in bringing others to know the love of Jesus? Is that not amazing in itself?

As God moves throughout the nations, many are accepting Jesus as their Savior, finding new life and hope. Many more, have yet to still hear about Jesus' great love.

My prayer is that as these stories are read, God stirs in our hearts a passion so deep, that we are all compelled to be His witnesses - and to make disciples, right here at home and across all nations. As this passion is awakened, you may be unsure what the next step might be. Please reach out to us at [SIM Canada](http://SIMCanada.org). We have team members that would love to talk with you and help Make Your Passion Your Calling.

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do."
Ephesians 2:10



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Breaking Through the Darkness - Abdu's Story By: Ben Schroeder

We sat under a shade tree in the heat of the day with Abdu's father. His faith and ways of life have been rooted in generations of Muslim tradition. However, the Holy Spirit was at work. Abdu's father did not turn us away but rather welcomed us with open arms. In time, as we shared stories about Jesus and prayed for God to open his heart, a trust was built between us.

"I want my children to go to school," the man said one day. "Can you help?"

"We can," we told him. "It's a Christian school," we explained. "We teach from the Christian Bible and tell the stories of Jesus."

He didn't hesitate, and proceeded to tell us, "That is not a problem."

It was weeks later that Abdu, a shy and nervous 11-year-old boy, arrived at the school with seven of his brothers and sisters. True to his faith, he refused even to enter the chapel. "It's pagan," he insisted. "I will not go in." Faithful to the belief he knew so little about, he continued to pray as he was taught.

The staff was concerned and wanted him to come to chapel. "Be patient," I told them. "Let the Holy Spirit do His work."

I told our team to let God's light shine through with kindness. And as the light of love began to work, the walls of tradition and fear began to crumble. In just a few weeks, Abdu's curiosity got the best of him, and he walked into the chapel service on his own.

The teachings of Jesus caught his attention. He had many questions. "How could Jesus be God's son? God had no children?" He was earnestly searching for the true God, and we answered him with God's Word from the Scriptures.

Then one afternoon, Abdu came to us quietly and said, "I want to follow Jesus."

He immersed himself in Bible study, joining our Sunday discipleship classes. He learned that Jesus invited us to be baptized by water as a commitment to follow Him. He wanted to be baptized... but there was a catch. We could not baptise him without his father's permission.

Bravely, he wrote a letter to his father and asked one of his father's wives to deliver it. He was afraid, but trusted Jesus. We prayed with him. And then we waited.

At last, we received a phone call. Answering it eagerly and fearfully. "If this is the way God is working in my son's life," Abdu's father said, "who am I to stop it?"

With his brothers and sisters watching and his father's approval, Abdu was baptized.

God's Light, clearly shines in Abdu's life as he continues to grow in his faith with confidence. A Bible was gifted to his father, who welcomed us to his village. Jesus' light now burns strongly in Abdu's life, breaking through the darkness with His marvelous light. Abdu is the first believer in his family, and we're praying that he will not be the last.



Bathtub Baptism Brings Joy in North Africa By: Tim Allan

The petite young woman entered the North African church almost apologetically. Unused to the customs of the Christian faith, she had no idea what to expect or even what the inside of a church would look like.

Like many young women of her faith background in this modern city, she was wearing Western clothes and looked very similar to many members of the congregation. The woman, a primary school teacher by profession, had often walked past the church on her way to other places in the city but, until this day, had never entered its doors. However, just recently, something – or maybe someone – had been pulling her to go inside.

She picked a day to go in when she knew other people would be there; people who could perhaps answer her questions or at least offer a friendly handshake and a smile. As she went in, a friendly face came up to her and asked: “What brings you here today?” “I just wanted to see what the inside of a church looked like,” she replied.

The church she had entered was a large international church, where the services are in English, even in a country where French and Arabic are the major languages. She stayed for the service, then came back a week or two later. Gradually, the church members became aware that while she wasn’t turning up every week, she was coming regularly. And soon she was starting to attend some of the midweek Bible studies.

Over a year or so, she became a familiar face at the church. All the while, she was telling people who asked that she was just trying to learn more about Jesus... and that she did not yet believe in Him. But behind the scenes and unbeknownst to most of the

congregation, she had been digging more deeply into God’s word with the help of a few believers. They had quietly shepherded her and eventually brought her to the point where she was ready to commit her life to Jesus.

One warm Sunday morning in the middle of the service, she was invited to stand up by the leader. He announced that she had something she wanted to tell the church. As she spoke, she revealed she had been consistently reading the Bible and had now trusted completely in Jesus, wanting to reflect that by taking the step of baptism. She told the church: “I saw Jesus in all your faces.”

Oh, how the church rejoiced! They gathered round the young woman and prayed over her, before heading back to the pastor’s house for a meal and the baptism. As they gathered in the house, it was obvious there was only one place to baptize her – the bathtub! So, with much joy and laughter, she was immersed in the tub and joined the community of baptized believers.

Of course, this is not the end of the story. The church continues to disciple her as she learns more about life in Jesus and draws closer to Him. One church member, who works with SIM, said: “It’s amazing how God was at work in her life, even before she’d had any contact with Christian people. She said she’d had dreams of Jesus and even before being baptized, she had dreamt of being immersed in water. It’s been a huge encouragement to the whole church to see her come to faith and to see that faith take root in her.”



When Fulani Hear the Call of the True Shepherd By: Jon and Daniel

Imagine 45 million people, a massive, dispersed nation of herders, the Fulani. Their heritage is a nomadic culture, spanning 24 countries of extreme climate - steeped in Islam and animism. Often unwelcome, and still largely unreached by the Gospel, imagine the transformation if these shepherds found Jesus as their ultimate Shepherd.

While less than one percent of the Fulani are followers of Christ, God is actively stirring hearts across West and Central Africa. The narrative spans a continent: in South Sudan, the Falata (B clan) are being touched by the Holy Spirit. Crucially, they share historic, linguistic ties with the G Fulani clan far to the west in Niger. Their dialects are virtually identical.

In Niger, a vibrant, growing community of Jesus followers within the G clan has ignited a vision to reach their nomadic kin. Meanwhile, a small group among the Falata heard the message of salvation through Arabic Gospel workers. This connection bore dramatic fruit in 2023 when a Fulani evangelist and SIM missionary from Niger made a short trip to South Sudan. Thirty-five Falata men gathered to hear the Gospel in their own language. Their response was immediate and urgent: they invited the evangelist to stay for three more weeks to understand the message better!

The Three-Week Invitation

Two months later, just before the Falata moved their herds for their six-month migration, the evangelist returned. Over that visit, he presented the Gospel to an estimated 150 men, engaging in deep, heartfelt

discussions. The Falata brothers then made an even bolder invitation: they asked the evangelist to move there permanently to explain the Gospel message more thoroughly.

This man, Aiden, felt God's call confirmed, and he joined SIM to serve in South Sudan during the six months the Falata are present each year. He even recruited a partner, Bryce. Now, two couples and five children are preparing to go, launching a truly indigenous mission movement.

The Undeniable Call: Fire and a Faithful Word

The journey of the partner, Bryce, provides a powerful testimony to God's leading. As Aiden and Bryce began preparing, Bryce shared how God had made His will undeniable through three successive, book-ended experiences over two years.

The signposts were dramatic. First, a dream explicitly directed him toward the target country. During a Bible class, he witnessed an incident that pointed him to the same field. Between these two events, the second, most stunning confirmation occurred. In many parts of Africa, simple homes are built in Niger are often constructed from wood poles and thatch. Stray embers can trigger devastating, swift blazes. Bryce lost his home and all his possessions in such a fire. Nothing remained. Then, amid the ashes, inside the incinerated bag and its contents, he found his Fulfulde New Testament only slightly charred at the edges. This was a clear, scorching testimony to him of the surety of God and His Word.

The final, indisputable sign came within a week of the third event. Evangelist Aiden, knowing absolutely nothing of Bryce dreams, the fire, or the classroom incident, approached him with a simple question: Would he and his family accompany him to the target country to bring the Gospel to the Fulani? The answer was an immediate, resounding yes.

A Family Mission: Trusting the Unseen

Aiden and Bryce anticipated that crossing international borders would be the hardest hurdle. Instead, God started their journey at home, transforming the

hearts of their families. When Aiden shared the call with his wife Olivia, he was unsure what her response might be. Instead, Olivia prayed and replied with calm conviction: "If this is what the Lord is saying, I am ready to go." She gathered their children, and to her surprise, they agreed with joy. Even her parents viewed the call as a good thing, a family assignment. Bryce's wife, Ella responded with similar peace, willing to follow wherever God led.

Their shared obedience became a quiet testimony, cementing their trust in the One who called, rather than in what they could see. ■



Stories from North Africa

Simple Ministry By: L.B

North African ministries are neither flashy nor sensational but characterized by the quiet obedience of eternal significance. The spiritual battleground is real in this region, but light is breaking through... one story at a time. The North Africa region consists of five countries and covers 4000 kms from East to West. This region is heavily influenced by Islam, but the Gospel is slowly making inroads into the minds and hearts of the more than 200 million people who live here.

North Africa has ancient Christian roots. It's home to church fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine. It's also the scene of famous Roman martyrs such as Perpetua, Felicity and many others. Today, the church buildings lie in ruins - places of worship abandoned to the elements and the effects of time.

Today, believers consist of less than 0.03% of the population and often face persecution from their families, communities or governments. Small groups meet across the region, many struggling with a lack of leadership, discipleship and trust.

People may not be coming to faith in huge revivals but the workers in North Africa get to stand witness and participate in something just as powerful—individual lives being changed as people meet Jesus through dreams and miraculous circumstances. The greatest need is to simply walk alongside these new believers as they navigate both transformation and persecution in their newfound lives.

Workers serving in this region of the world are actively engaged in discipleship, teaching, civil society, business training and evangelism. North Africa's opportunities and needs are as diverse as its people... from encounters with Muslims who have never encountered a Christian, to prayer meetings with house movements' leaders. When the Lord calls, we have a responsibility to answer in obedience. If you are reading this, please stop and pray. Consider. Reflect. Pray again. Does obedience to God mean staying or going? Be encouraged that He is leading you and remember what Hudson Taylor once wrote: "God isn't looking for people of great faith, but for individuals ready to follow Him." It's as simple as that.



From The Desert To The Sea By: S.P.

"The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom... The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs."

- Isaiah 35:1&7

North Africa is a massive region with diverse landscapes: from the sands of the Sahara in the South, to the bustling cities of the interior, to the fishing villages of the Mediterranean. God is at work here, building His Kingdom in His perfect timing and manner.

Workers are involved in equally diverse ministries: selling spectacles, making sugar from dates, teaching kindergarten or lecturing university

students. Some are working in tourism, medical ministry, or construction. From counseling individuals through trauma healing groups to mentoring young people using 3D printers and robotics clubs, workers take every opportunity God brings to share the Gospel through words and actions - a few even get to preach on a Sunday morning!

The North Africa workers are a multi-ethnic team united by a vision to see disciples in least-reached areas. They are committed to prayer as they live amidst great spiritual and physical needs, trusting God to lead them forward. Whether you feel a call to serve, pray, support, or go - there's a place for you in North Africa.

Come... and see the desert blossom!

Community Health Education By: C.H and S.P.

A new pilot project was launched in North Africa this Spring: a two-year programme of health and wellness-based seminars. The goal of the project is to build strong communities by investing in the lives of individuals, who are then able to develop and influence their families, neighbourhoods and communities in positive ways. The regular training sessions focus on four areas: physical, emotional, social, and moral wellbeing. This programme has been used in other parts of the Arab world with good results and is suitable for all members of the community - regardless of where they are in their faith journey.

One exciting aspect is that international workers will be collaborating with local believers to present the

various seminars. This is a fantastic opportunity to empower local believers and build trust as they share in this Kingdom work together. Just as the roots of a tree determine what kind of fruit will be produced, in the same way, this program aims to influence ways of thinking - rather than initially focusing on behavioral changes. This type of treatment is preventive in nature, as it targets the root cause of the problem rather than only addressing its symptoms.

Please pray that this initial programme will be well received and that it would speak deeply to the needs of the local communities. Our dream is to see this tool used in needy places throughout North Africa. ■



Christmas in Central Asia By: Geir Albertsen

A few weeks ago, I went to the capital city to pick up Thomas*, a new arrival to our country. He arrived on a beautiful and sunny Saturday morning. After dropping his baggage at the hotel, I took him to a well-known coffee shop for breakfast. A dear sister and friend of mine arranged for a friend to give us all a one-day tour. After lunch, we were ready to explore the beautiful capital city.

Vera*, our guide, who spoke English reasonably well, was eager to show us her metropolis. Vera led us to a large bazaar filled with colorful rugs, exotic clothes, tasty fruits, and the aromas of a variety of spices. From there we visited a huge mosque, an old koranic school and a luxurious shopping mall. As we crossed the shopping mall, we discovered an amazing park behind it. Darkness was already falling in the park as people of all ages were walking around the artificial lake. Streaming jets of water were accompanied by a show of colourful lights, dancing to the music.

From there, Vera took us to a very nice restaurant, which served delicious food. Being more at ease with Thomas and I, she began talking about herself. She was a married lady in her mid-thirties, working at the office of an international pharmaceutical company. As a mother of two beautiful daughters, she was keen to show us their photos. She felt very comfortable with us - to the point of sharing about her dreams for the future.

When we talked about Christmas approaching, she said: 'We don't celebrate that here...' she said in a very dry tone of voice. As we understood, Vera and her husband appeared to be agnostics. She mentioned that one of her dreams is to speak English fluently. Well, I would say that she is quite good,

compared with most of the people in this country. In my assessment, she just needs more practice in conversation, which is not easy to find in a context where English is not the main language. She confirmed that this is just what she needs... in reaching this dream.

Suddenly, an idea just came to my mind: "Vera, if you want, we could have a conversation in English online, once a week. And you can choose the time for you, because I have more flexibility." "Really?!", she exclaimed! "Let's start this coming Monday, from 8:00 to 9:00 am." Since then, we've been having conversations in English every Monday morning. I want to help her to achieve two dreams: First, to help her become more fluent in English. Second, to keep building a good relationship with her, with the hope that next month - December - I can share the great dream, and plan that God has for her:

"For I know the plans I have for, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jer 29:11

As Christmas is approaching, so too is the time for me to tell her that Christ came... To fulfill God's plan, and to make it possible for her and her family to have an eternal hope and bright future, beyond this world. Through His death on the cross for our sins, and His resurrection for our justification, anyone who believes has eternal life, life in abundance.

The best gift I could have this Christmas is to see Vera receiving the precious gift of God's grace... receiving Christ as her personal Savior and Lord. Will you pray for that? Will you pray for the millions in Central Asia that don't know yet that the Savior has come? ■



Planting Hope in Quebec's New Generation - By: Don Longworth

The Gen Z generation is here! The real God is what they seek... and they are turning to Him - often without our assistance!

There are many of them who are tired of the angry secularism they have been forced to endure. They see it as empty, contradictory, and desperately lacking - and they are right.

If you are a student of revivals as I am, you will find that revival history seems to be rhyming these days. I believe that we are observing a broad, yet unmistakable sovereign move of God gathering momentum, particularly among Gen Z. I also believe it is a direct answer to the consistent, travailing prayers of many faithful intercessors.

One sign of this phenomenon is that Gospel-resistant places, once thought "frozen over" are experiencing a thawing, warming, and thirsting for genuine spiritual truth - and these experiences are rising.

One remarkable example of this "thawing" is what we see happening in the province of Québec.

With its stunning St. Lawrence River views and lively cultural festivals, Québec remains a unique and vibrant part of Canada's identity. Yet, this province has been a bastion of resistance to the Gospel for over 400 years! Over eight million French-Canadians whose heritage harkens back to France, call Québec home. They are also, by far, Canada's largest unreached people group. Less than 1% of French Qué-

becois identify as evangelical followers of Christ.

This secular landscape was shaped by a mass exodus from Catholicism into skepticism and secularism during the 1960s, coined the "Quiet Revolution." Today, a whole new generation of French Canadians have now grown up who, unlike their parents, are spiritually open and searching.

It is in this context that SIM Canada is answering an urgent generational opportunity to come alongside new churches and see them win this next generation of French-Québécois for Christ.

In response to this, SIM Canada's Momentum Québec Project (#090243) was launched in October 2025. Led by Philippe Hui, the initial goal is to rapidly and intentionally mobilize at least eight qualified SIM workers into 2-3 established church plants in the Montreal area of Québec by 2028.

Philippe, his wife Myriam, and their three children answered God's call to go into a field ripe for harvest where millions are living and dying without Christ. They relocated their family from France to Québec because they were burdened with the urgent need in the Montreal area and have partnered with a local church-planting movement.

As missions' mobilizers and church planters, they thrive in community and their gifting in hospitality is evidenced by how their living room constantly buzzes with guests, sharing stories and meals.



Philippe and Myriam's journey in Québec hasn't been easy; challenges and grief have tested them, but God's provision has been steady, and their local church in the Montreal area has solidly embraced them and supported their calling to Québec.

Philippe and Myriam are building on the foundations of trust that other SIM Canada workers have built with the church in Québec over many years. These relationships have now opened doors for SIM Canada to send workers to partner with local church planting networks.

Faced with this unique window to reach the next generation, we are convinced that the time is now for SIM Canada to boldly commit—launching a unified push to mobilize hearts and hands for Québec's harvest.

By establishing the Momentum Québec Project, we aim to support three strategic needs:

1. Momentum Québec is a force-multiplying project that will supply the funds needed for Philippe, a gifted mobilizer, to travel locally and internationally and recruit qualified SIM workers from Bible schools, conferences, and churches. The initial goal is to mobilize eight qualified church planters who will come along side two to three new church plants by 2028.

2. The Momentum Québec project aims to care well for our SIM workers serving within Québec's challenging and often stressful spiritual environment. To combat discouragement and build up a healthy team, the project will provide funding for periodic mini spiritual retreats for our workers.

3. Reaching the next generation means adapting our approach to meeting them where they are - namely,

in the online sphere. Momentum Québec aims to fund basic equipment and training to mobilize at least two skilled workers who will help church plants and other gospel ministries maximize their online reach and impact for the Gospel locally.

With the headwinds of secularism in Québec rising, SIM Canada has a narrow window to engage this generation and to lean into what God is doing in the province. By faith, we perceive a greater wind, the sovereign wind of the Holy Spirit moving across the harvest fields of Québec.

Pray with me for more workers like the Hui family, who will join in the great harvest and see an entire generation swept into the life-giving Kingdom of God from Québec! ■

- ~8.1M French Québécois live in Canada; only ~0.8% are evangelical.

Sources: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/11765/CA

- Secularization laws make Québec a hard place to plant and sustain churches: Laïcité measures (Bill 21, Bill 94, proposed Bill 9) increase pressure on public expressions of faith and can complicate using/renting public-institution spaces for worship/prayer.

Sources: <https://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-21-42-1.html> <https://www.assnat.qc.ca/en/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-94-43-1.html> <https://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/travaux-parlementaires/projets-loi/projet-loi-9-43-2.html> <https://www.quebec.ca/nouvelles/actualites/details/depot-du-projet-de-loi-n-9-quebec-renforce-son-modele-de-laicite-67307>



Welcoming the Stranger - By: Stephani McBride

It's important to recognize that trauma is part of a global crisis and that refugees are especially vulnerable. There are currently over 123.2 million forcibly displaced children, women and men in the world - the highest number ever recorded. That's 1 for every 67 people alive today. The stress of adjusting to a new culture can exacerbate anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The city of Toronto is a gateway city for refugees seeking asylum into Canada and the church is responding to offer welcome through trauma healing.

"People leave their country all the time but to be forced to move, the moment has you unprepared: physically, mentally, culturally in every way. There are a lot of ruptures: a break with your job, with your identity, with your culture, with your roots. You are not prepared to break with these things. When you fly to another place, you carry all of these fractures in your soul; even your tears are not enough to express all of your sadness in leaving your homeland, the rivers, the mountains; there are not enough tears to express the sadness, honestly. That is why your body tries to express the sadness of your soul, even if you cry a river; your body gets skinny or fat or responds in other ways. You don't immediately know all of these broken things; you think more about the difficulties. We don't immediately notice all of those broken things in our soul - they happen later. We realize: Oh, where is my family? Where is the big porch where we used to prepare to have the celebration together? That is when you start to notice that you have been broken."

- Refugee Reimagined by Mark Glanville and Luke Glanville

The effects of trauma can be profound and long-lasting, preventing us from engaging with God and ourselves. With resources that help integrate biblical and mental health principles, the Trauma Healing Institute empowers the church to address the effects of trauma and loss. In our approach to trauma healing, we combine proven mental health practices with biblical wisdom. As a community-based approach, our method makes a significant difference in that it invites people to participate in a healing and resilience-building process together with others and with God.

"The church's greatest mission in the 21st century is trauma." - Diane Langberg

In a group setting, individuals meet together in a comfortable environment in which they can help one another heal. Group lessons use art, stories, activities, and discussion questions to help participants gain a deeper understanding of themselves, God, and their fellow participants.

Within the safe space of Healing Groups, people find their voice, tell their story, and unlock doors that have been closed to healing. They read the Bible to hear what God has to say about suffering. They learn about the journey of healing, and they begin to forgive those who have hurt them. As a result of participating in a healing group, individuals discover they are not alone in their struggles.

"I came into the healing circle during one of the most difficult seasons of my life. I am a lawyer and health research ethicist, and before coming to Canada as a refugee claimant, I had a stable, fulfilling life and career in my home country. I was surrounded by

family, served actively in my church, and had a strong emotional support system. However, I was suddenly forced to leave my country without my husband, and this abrupt separation, combined with the loss of everything familiar, deeply affected my emotional, mental, and social well-being. I was searching for comfort, clarity, and community; something to help me understand the overwhelming feelings of grief, fear, and isolation I was experiencing. That is what led me to the trauma healing circle.

Through the trauma healing training, I began to understand the nature and impact of trauma not just as a concept, but as a real force that had shaped my thoughts, emotions, and even my physical well-being. I learned how to name my pain and recognize the ways I had been carrying invisible wounds. Most importantly, I learned that I am not alone. I found a new Christian community that embraced me, and I was reminded of God's presence and faithfulness, even in my most vulnerable moments. I started to see healing not as forgetting the past, but as finding meaning in it and allowing God to work through it.

This journey has changed me in profound ways. I am learning to give myself grace and to embrace each day with hope. I am more aware of my emotions and better equipped to process them in healthy ways. Spiritually, I feel more anchored. I've learned to trust God more deeply, not only for my future but also for the future of my three daughters. The trauma healing circle helped me move from a place of survival to a path of restoration. I still have challenges, but I now face them with renewed strength, faith, and a supportive community around me."

(Testimonial from refugee joining healing group)

"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land... you shall love him as yourself." - Leviticus 19:33-34 ■

God at Work in Ukraine - Stories of Hope By: Jana

It has been fifteen months since I first travelled into Ukraine during the war with a simple prayer in my heart: "Lord, it hurts us to see what is happening in Ukraine. We are here—if You want, please use us as an organization." It's also been exactly one year since, at a small conference, the director of the Ukrainian Trauma Healing Institute stopped me and, full of enthusiasm, asked: "Would you come in January to serve with us at a retreat for women and children of fallen soldiers?"

In that moment, I had about a thousand questions in my head... Whom will I be able to find over Christmas? It is so soon—we normally prepare trips for about half a year in advance. It is a country at war. We do not have the money for this. We do not have the system in place. We do not speak Ukrainian... Then suddenly, I heard myself reply: "Yes, of course, we will come." Looking back, I knew that in that moment I did not say yes only to this one retreat, but to the entire SIM ministry in Ukraine. Later, the words of one Ukrainian friend proved to be true: "When we take one step in faith, God will take ten."

Since then, we have served at five rehabilitation

retreats for women and children of fallen soldiers from frontline areas. On three separate trips, we have helped to reconstruct a social centre for thirty internally displaced people—mostly elderly and sick people whose homes in eastern villages were taken by the Russian army. For the first time, we were also able to host a rest retreat in the Czech Republic for thirty exhausted Ukrainian Christians. Altogether, we have sent thirty people from Czech churches, from six different denominations. Many of them are already returning to Ukraine and some are exploring how they might serve there in long-term capacities.

In Ukraine we cooperate with several organizations: an entire evangelical denomination, the Betania charitable fund, the organization Eastern Angel (which supports volunteer chaplains), UA Ants, and the Ukrainian Trauma Healing Institute. All these partnerships are very important for us, because through them we always clearly know where our teams are serving and how our finances are being used.

Our rehabilitation retreats take place in Transcarpathia, a mountain region where sirens do not sound, and drones do not fly. This alone is deeply healing to

continue ►



everyone who can finally sleep through the night without sirens and explosions, eat in peace, and let the children fall asleep without sleeping pills. They do not have to spend hours in shelters; instead, they breathe fresh air and feel the sunshine. On top of that, each retreat is filled with rest activities and therapeutic care - especially art and play therapy. Above all, they hear the message of Christ, who alone can draw near to their broken hearts and the deep pain they carry.

Testimony:

In September, we hosted a rest retreat for women and children from the city of Sumy. Sumy lies very close to the Russian border and is often bombed both day and night. Trains only go there every two or three days, and it is not possible to book tickets far in advance. Until the last moment we did not even know on which day we would finally meet in western Ukraine. Just prior to departure, a rocket hit the apartment block where one of the Ukrainian volunteers resides. The blast wave blew out her windows. She chose to leave everything to serve the mothers and children at the retreat.

Throughout the retreat we heard fragmentary stories from the lives of these Christian volunteers:

Anhelika - a teenager who showed us photos of her brother, a fighter pilot

Veronika's parents - both killed in a drone strike in Sumy

Yaroslava - both her husband and her only son serving at the front

Yet these painful details only surfaced occasionally. Most of the time we saw them laughing, dancing and serving the children and mothers with all their hearts.

They did not speak much about their own sufferings, but we know that by choosing to remain and serve in their city, they live every day with real danger to their lives. And yet, when they began to sing and worship, the whole hall was suddenly filled with deep joy and peace. It was in that moment that I realized I was seeing with my own eyes the love described in Paul's Letter to the Romans:

"Every day we are being given over to death for your sake; we are like sheep destined for slaughter. But in all this we are more than conquerors through the One who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor powers, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." - Romans 8:38-39

If you have Ukraine on your heart and would like to learn more about our ministry, please feel free to contact me at czechia.office@sim.org. ■



My Journey from Suffering to Hope - Ndjambelwa's Testimony By: Karen Henriksen

After my son died - from what I believe as him being a victim of a curse - I fell seriously ill. He had suffered from abdominal pain and fever before passing away. Not long after, my own health began to deteriorate. I developed a persistent cough and became so weak I could no longer walk—only crawl. My body grew thin, and my clothes hung loosely on me.

I went to Rio da Huila-Tchihambangala Hospital. Although a chest X-ray wasn't available, lab tests confirmed I had tuberculosis. The doctor started me on treatment, and I was admitted to the TB ward, where I stayed for seven months. During that time, another of my children also died—again, from what I believe as him being a victim of a curse. It was a season of deep sorrow and suffering. While in the hospital, I heard the Word of God through the hospital evangelist. His message awakened something inside me. I felt God calling me to leave behind my past life in Tchaungo—a place marked by loss, curses, and fear. I knew I couldn't return. Whenever I heard planes flying overhead, I longed to be on one, escaping far away.

After my discharge, I went to stay with a relative in Chibia town. There, I met a Christian and shared my story. I told him I had no family and didn't want to return to a place filled with sorcerers who had cast spells on my children. He brought my situation to the church in Mbambi, and they welcomed me with open arms. I was overjoyed to begin a new life.

Before my illness, I drank, partied, and insulted others. But after hearing God's Word, everything changed. I found peace. I lived with a church family for two years, and they helped me build a house. My chest is healed. I've been baptized and now actively participate in prayer meetings, the women's group, and other church activities. For the past three years, I've served

as the treasurer of the ladies' group.

Though I tire easily, I grow corn, peanuts, beans, sorghum, and millet to sell. I usually grow onions too but missed planting this year due to two bouts of malaria. Even with the occasional illness, life in the Lord is good. I used to fear death, but now I know I'll be with Him.

Singing hymns helps me focus on God and fills me with a deep longing to be with Him. This is my favorite hymn:

This journey is long, very long. The climb is hard, it is hard. It is important to be strong and stand firm in Jesus. This long journey, very long—when someone dies. This long journey, very long—when somebody is sick. It is important to be strong and stand firm in Jesus.

I'm full of gratitude for all the help I've received. I send warm greetings to everyone who has supported us at the hospital. Please stay strong and continue helping.

Healing bodies. Transforming hearts. God lovingly drew Ndjambelwa—sick with tuberculosis and grieving the loss of two children—into a relationship with Himself. The Hand of God. By Prayer.

Rio da Huila Hospital serves the Ovamula-Nyaneka people in southern Angola.

Pray With Us

- For our community outreach program to reach unreached villages.
- For physical and spiritual healing for patients like Ndjambelwa.
- For strength and wisdom for our team. ■

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