



Our Story: Vision & Mission



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After I received a confirmation for my call in the summer of 1996 I left my country to finish my theological studies in Germany. I joined the European Nazarene Bible College and graduated after 2 years. I came back to Lebanon in the summer of 1998 with a mission to plant a church in Beirut-Achrafieh with a promise from God from Deuteronomy 11: 10-12 and Isaiah 62:10.

The starting years were difficult and discouraging. Although I had few volunteers from my mother church working with me but we were not able to make a breakthrough in the community. The attendance was low and our resources were few. Whatever we did we were not able to attract a crowd to church. At that time, we did not have a church building but only a small room that fits 30 people maximum. Also, we did not have any place in the community outside the church walls. I remember one time we wanted to do an outreach in the community and distribute some bibles. We asked a man if we can put a table in front of his apartment that was on the main street. He let us for some time and after that he asked us to leave.

In 2006 we had some plans to build a sanctuary, next to our place where we used to meet, in the hope of having more people coming to church. We did not have any money. One of the donors was interested to help and he sent me a question if our church has some converts from a Muslim background. At that time, we had 2 people coming to church from a Muslim background. One of them was baptized in our church and came from an Egyptian background. So I wrote back to him saying we have two people but we have a desire to see the Muslim world coming to Christ and I mentioned the prayer of Ibrahim: "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!" Genesis 17: 18

This man that I still don't know sent us \$52,000. We started the building project and with the help of the international church we were able to finish the building on Easter 2007. I never imagined that this place will someday be flooded with Muslim people. I believe that this donor had a vision from God when he asked the question and he donated the money for this purpose. I believe that he saw something that will happen in the coming years but we ourselves did not see. After the new building few more people joined the church but that was not our dream and vision. Our vision was to see big number of people coming to Jesus in a short time.

In March 2011 the Syrian crisis began and in 2012 and 2013 more and more refugee families started coming to our community. I remember one Saturday we had new children coming to our program and we discovered that they are from refugee families living next to our church. When we visited the children, we discovered that they are not going to school. At that time, we had 2 Syrian ladies attending our church and they were gifted with children. They were in big need



financially and did not have any job. I had an idea of starting one class for these new children and asking the two ladies to teach them. I remember I sent an email one evening asking few people to donate for that program so that we can pay a salary for these two ladies for one year. To my surprise in just few minutes I received a positive response and the whole amount was raised. The next day, I believe was Monday March or April of 2013 our first class was established using the one room we had at church with 2 full workers.

This class was successful with more and more children coming. Now their bigger brothers and sisters wanted to come also. So we opened another class and then another class until we had 4 or 5 classes using the church hall with separators beside the old room we had. The staff grew from 2 to around 6 or 7 teachers with around 50 children. Our first informal education program was launched under the name of *STEP*; Syrian Transition Education Program.

Because of continual increase of children, it was difficult for the church facility to accommodate all the students. We moved to another nearby area and rented a school building to hold our program in the afternoon. Now the *STEP* program serves around 100 children with 11 full time workers with a yearly budget of around \$100,000.

When the *STEP* program was at our church building, we discovered that some children didn't bring any food during the break. We started making some sandwiches but then we said it is better to provide healthy and hot meals for the children. We had a small room at the church so we opened a small kitchen and began to cook for children 2 times per week. That was June 2014.

Another Christian organization heard what we were doing and asked if we were interested to cook hot meals for the elderly and the sick in the community. So we started serving hot meals to 80 people from our community 3 times per week and to 50 children 2 times per week. Our second ministry was established under the name of *Agape Table*. In 2018 we rented a place in the community not only to prepare for the hot meals but also to sell hot meals and pastry for those who can afford to pay so we could have some income for the feeding project. Now *Agape table* has 7 full time workers.

I remember one New Year Eve, we had a refugee family coming to attend the service and they had a baby with bare feet. She asked us if we have socks for her child and a pair of shoes. This incident made us think how we can serve clothes and shoes for refugees and plus anyone in need. One of the Old Catholic schools in our city that was closed due to financial problems heard what we were doing in the community and offered to give us a warehouse to put clothes and shoes. So our third ministry was established under the name *Karibi* means "My Neighbor" where we brought second hand and sometimes new clothes and shoes to distribute to refugees and anyone interested. We put a small charge on every piece so that we keep the dignity of the people asking for help and provide some income for the ministry expenses. Later we rented a third place in the community and now we have two places; one as a warehouse for clothes, shoes and food packages and another shop for the display. *Karibi* has now 3 workers.

After the big explosion in August 4, 2020 another two ministries were established. The first one was *Mustard Seed* mini market. The idea came as we were distributing many food packages. We thought of giving food vouchers instead of food packages so people can come and get what they



need from the church mini market and at the same time we can sell the items and have some income to provide more free food vouchers for the needy.

The second ministry that was started after the massive explosion was *Balassan Counseling and Medical Center*. The vast needs were not only for shelter, medical care, food, clothing, and hygiene items; traumatized people also needed emotional, psychological and spiritual support. Today *Balassan* has a Psychiatrist, Psychologist, General Medicine Doctor, Physiotherapist and soon a Speech Therapist.

We rented now a new place next to the church building with the intention to serve the nearby university campus. The plan is to open a *Christian Cafeteria* that will serve the community but mainly students.

The church all in all operates in 7 different locations now and run 7 different ministries and businesses. The ministries and businesses are: 1-STEP, 2-Agape Table, 3-Karibi, 4-Food Packages Warehouse, 5-Mustard Seed, 6-Balassan and 7-Cafeteria.

Of course, all these ministries and business are our windows to the community. In all our locations we distribute Christian materials and bibles. We run Christian songs, we pray every morning before we start our work, we evangelize and we build relationships with the community. We believe that the Lord has called us as a church to make Christlike disciples in the nations. Of course, that is the Great Commission for every church. But we believe also that the Lord has given us a unique strategy to accomplish this mission and that is through combining discipleship making with acts of mercy and work for profit (Business). Of course, when we say profit that means a profit that will go towards the ministry itself to pay the salaries and other expenses. In all of the seven branches at least two of the three components (discipleship, acts of mercy and work for profit) are present. In some branches like *Agape Table* and *Karibi* the three components are in place.

The Lord showed us the “What”. The “What” is the vision: To see big number of people coming to Jesus in a short time. And then he gave us the “When”. That was during the refugee crisis when the Lord opened our eyes to the needs of the community. And then He showed us the “How”. The “How” is to start projects in the community that combines discipleship, acts of mercy and business.

As I mentioned before that our problem when we started the church was that we did not have any point of contact with the community outside the church walls and now we have seven. We have a list of 600 families that we can visit any time we want. It was very difficult to get people to the church and now we hold 3 services in the weekend to accommodate people. We did not have enough workers to do the ministry and now we have around 50 workers (full time, part time and volunteers). We have a full-time team just for home visits. We have different Discovery Bible Study groups that meet every week. We have people on the discipleship list and others followed up one on one. Every year we do baptism and nearly half of the people who get baptized are from a Muslim background.

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Now our vision is to see big number of people (not only in our city) in Beirut, Lebanon and the entire Arab World coming to Jesus in a short time. We want to see this model that the Lord has blessed to be replicated and implemented in other areas in Lebanon, the Middle East and the Arab World.

By His Grace and To His Glory.

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District Superintended

