



MECO
CANADA
Middle East Christian Outreach

Winter Spring 2019

NEWS

ENGAGING WITH OTHERS

Prayer needed



Joining MEC



Family adventure

YOUR PRAYERS NEEDED



“Even a small service must be inspired by the Lord. Our prayer should be: Lord what do you want me to do? Where must I go? We can then remain in the centre of the will of God and there it is safe.” Corry Ten Boom

We agree whole heartedly with the late Dutch evangelist, Corrie Ten Boom. If the Lord doesn't inspire our work and if we aren't willing to be directed by Him, any work we do is in vain. For that reason would you please join us in a weekly prayer vigil? To be involved you don't have to travel any further than your own prayer closet and you can pray whenever you like.

Please pray:

- That we – Personal and Board – will seek to be in the centre of God's will in all we do
- That God will open our eyes to see where He is working and that we will join Him in that work without hesitation
- That we will keep our eyes on Jesus when facing difficulties
- That God will provide the people and financial resources we need to do our work
- That we will be a blessing to others

In addition would you please pray:

- For God's wisdom for all those serving in the Middle East and in Canada
- For those who are being ministered to – that Jesus will reveal Himself to them
- For courage and comfort for those who are persecuted for their belief in Jesus
- For the Holy Spirit to convict those who persecute Christians
- For the end of the civil wars in Syria and Yemen
- That those helping refugees will know the Lord's strength and see His provision

Thank you for considering this request for prayer. We look forward to all that the Lord will do, not because we are worthy but because of His mercy.

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Please note that in some cases stock photos, pseudonyms or initials* have been used for security reasons*

OUR PRIORITY:

To mobilize people and prayer for God's work among Middle Eastern people in Canada and the Middle East.

For more information go to:

www.mecocanada.ca

MORE PEOPLE NEEDED TO BRING GOOD NEWS

ARE YOU THE ONE?

That's the thought provoking question on the front of an information card we have developed. Flip to the back of the card and there is a brief explanation of how MECO Canada has been praying that God would send more people to serve with us in Canada and the Middle East. Hence the question: Are you the one?



I don't know of a mission agency that isn't looking for more people. One of my colleagues in another organization recently gave a seminar on the lack of interest in long term mission service among Canadian Christians. I wrote to you about this when I reported on the Canadian Evangelical Mission Engagement Study that was released two years ago.

But here is some information I haven't shared before. It comes from Marv Newell, Senior Vice President and Editor of Evangelical Missions Quarterly

- All Missionaries in the World (Catholic, Protestant): 400,000
- Missionaries in the Reached World : 309,315 (77.3%)
- Missionaries in the Unevangelized World : 77,610 (19.4%)
- Missionaries in the Unreached World: 13,315 (3.3%)

At first glance the figures seem to reveal that the majority of missionaries are not serving where they are most needed, but I don't think that is the case. According to the Bible, it is God who sends out people and tells them where they should be:

"Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Act 8:26

"While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'" Acts 13:2

For me, Mr. Newell's numbers emphasize the overall lack of missionaries, not where they are and where they should be! According to the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity, there are 2.5 billion Christians in the world. Based on that figure, shouldn't there be more missionaries in the world? If just 10 per cent of Christians became missionaries that would be over 200 million people sharing God's good news.

Jesus recognized the dilemma we are facing and told his disciples what to do. He said, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the Harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." TNIV.

Can you imagine what would happen if 2.5 billion Christians took Jesus' direction seriously? Will you join us in praying to the Lord of the Harvest? Will you encourage others to pray too?

As you pray consider the following verses:

"For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" Acts: 13:47 TNIV

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?" Romans 10:14 & 15b TNIV

Linda Haist

Helping persecuted Christians stay strong in their faith

In November, MECO Canada was approved for membership in Middle East Concern (MEC), an association of Christian agencies and individuals that supports persecuted Christians in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

It is a privilege to be part of this organization. Founded in 1991, in response to needs expressed by Christian leaders in the MENA region, MEC provides encouragement to Christians and mobilizes world-wide prayer for them. It also advocates for the rights of Christians, challenges unjust laws and attitudes, and lobbies governments to take action. It uses its international influence to fight for the release of Christians imprisoned for their faith, and advocates for the rights of Christians to worship freely.

In addition, MEC trains Christian leaders in constitutional rights and international law so they can stand up for the Church as it faces persecution. It also provides training in crisis management and how to handle being arrested and interrogated. In times of crisis, MEC is involved in providing practical support for Christians being persecuted. Everything MEC does is in partnership with local Christian leaders.

Since 2016, MECO Canada has made it a priority to publish MEC's prayer requests whenever possible. Below are some of the latest requests we've received, which underscore the importance of MEC's work:

Iranian Christians request prayer for two believers who were arrested in Mashhad and Karaj.

Behnam Ersali and Davood Rasooli, both Christian converts from Karaj, had arranged to meet in Mashhad, but it is believed Iranian intelligence had intercepted the calls and learned of the arrangement.

Behnam Ersali was already in Mashhad, staying at a friend's house, when six security agents raided the house and arrested Behnam and a friend. After a few hours in detention, the friend was released, but Behnam remains detained and his whereabouts is unknown.

Two security agents arrested Davood Rasooli at 6 a.m. at his home in Karaj as he was preparing to go to Mashhad. They took him away, but later returned to search his house and confiscate some books and other personal belongings. Friends believe that he is in solitary confinement and undergoing interrogation in Rajai Shahr Prison.

Behnam Ersali had previously been fired from his job on account of his Christian faith.

Egyptian Christians request prayer after an attack in Minya province on two buses carrying Coptic Christians.

On November 2, 2018 gunmen opened fire on the buses which were driving towards the Monastery of Saint Samuel the Confessor. Seven Christians were killed and at least seven more were injured. A spokesperson for the Coptic Orthodox Church expected the death toll to rise further.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for this atrocity but on May 26, 2017 a bus carrying Christians on their way to the same monastery was also attacked by militants. Twenty-eight people were killed

Algerian Christians have requested prayer for four believers, including three from the same family, who are to appear in court after being accused of "inciting a Muslim to change his religion," an offence punishable with a prison term of two to five years and a fine of 500,000 to one million Algerian Dinars (approximately US \$4,500 to US \$8,700).

The charges follow accusations made in July 2018 by a woman whose husband, the main defendant, had converted to Christianity. She and members of her family accused her Christian husband, together with a Christian family that had attempted to mitigate the conflict between the couple, of wanting to convert her to Christianity.

Prayer and praise is also being requested for a young Algerian man, who had been charged with "illegal importation of Christian materials" after returning from a visit to a Middle Eastern country. He had with him some items, such as key rings and scarves, with Christian inscriptions. He was tried and acquitted, but in September 2018 the prosecutor decided to appeal. The young man appeared before a court of appeals in Algiers in October and was once again acquitted of all charges. Algerian Christians rejoice in his acquittal, the first full acquittal of a Christian in Algeria in recent years.

Christians in Sudan have requested prayer for 12 believers arrested in South Darfur in October.

Officers of the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) entered a home where the Christians were meeting, asked whether they were Christians, and detained them when they answered affirmatively. Three of the Christians are from a Christian background and were subsequently released. The other nine are converts from Islam.

Eight of the nine were released following severe beatings and the promise of their freedom if they recanted their faith. Having recanted under extreme pressure, they were charged with 'disturbing the peace' and released after a fine was paid.

The leader of the group, Tajadin Idris Yousef, refused to recant. He has been told that he will be charged with apostasy. In late October he was released pending a court hearing and is required to report to a local police station every three days.

Other Christians in the area have gone into hiding as a result of these arrests.



PLEASE PRAY:

- ◆ That those facing court hearings and imprisonment will know the presence, peace and protection of Jesus, and remain strong in their faith
- ◆ That church pastors and leaders will know the peace of Jesus, the wisdom of the Father and the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ That governments will amend laws so that Christians can worship freely without hindrance
- ◆ That those responsible for the closure of churches and intimidation of Christians will know the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the forgiveness and new life offered by Jesus
- ◆ That family members opposed to Christianity will come to repentance and be reconciled to the Father through Jesus and to those in their family who are believers
- ◆ For those mourning in Egypt for loved ones and friends
- ◆ For full recovery for those injured in the Egyptian attack
- ◆ that those responsible for brutal attacks will be brought to justice and will repent of the evil they have done

If you would like to receive regular prayer requests from MEC please contact our office.

Journey to the Middle East all that a family hoped for

What is it like to take a short-term trip? Is it worthwhile going for a few short weeks? We hope the following story will answer those questions?

In January 2017, my sister and I decided to visit our brother and sister in law in the Middle East. As soon as the word got out, my daughter-in-law and 11 year old grandson asked if they could join us. Cory* and Becky* affirmed that all four of us would be welcomed into their three bedroom flat, so we began to prepare for our exciting adventure.

The purpose of our visit was to expose ourselves to a very different culture, spend time with our relatives; see the work being done at the Christian school for refugee children where they serve as administrators; bring some needed supplies for the school; help at the school and of course, do a bit of sightseeing.

Airline tickets were purchased for November. The fun part of preparing for the trip was hitting the yard sales and thrift stores throughout the summer looking for hoodies for the school children and educational Bible story materials for the school. In addition, my grandson and his mother, who is a teacher, told their schools about the upcoming trip and asked if anyone would like to donate small stuffies, mini hockey sticks and school supplies. Within a week they were able to fill a huge duffle bag with all the donations.

Many hours were spent poring over guidebooks and websites about the country we would be visiting. We discovered that it is virtually impossible to get any of the country's money in Canada. Also we discovered that the Canadian government does not recommend travel to the country. Had we been planning this trip on our own this may have deterred us, especially because we were two old ladies, a child, and a beautiful young woman with long auburn hair. However, we had no qualms about going as Cory and Becky have lived in the country for a number of years and would never have encouraged us to visit if they thought we would be in danger.

We took a direct flight to the country and arrived early on a Friday morning which is a very quiet day in the Middle East because it is the day that Muslims have off work so that they can go to their mosques for services. We were picked up by Cory and a driver with a 15 passenger van that could accommodate all of us and our 12 pieces of luggage. In no time we were dropping off the suitcases filled with items for the students at the "school house" and having a quick tour of the empty building. Our first impressions were: "this is a well used building," and "how is it possible to teach and feed 500 people in this house every day?" My daughter-in-law observed that if the teachers in Canada she knows saw the school they would never complain about anything they have to deal with in their schools.



When classes resumed the next week, we handed out toothbrushes and tooth paste, gave each child in grades K-3 a stuffed animal, tutored small groups and read with individual students and classes. My daughter-in-law taught a lesson about Canada to grade 3 classes. My grandson set up mini hockey nets and taught students how to use mini hockey sticks. It was a delight working with the children. They are respectful and eager to learn English.

One thing that stood out for me was the way discipline was used. The emphasis, unlike many schools in the Middle East, was on discipline rather than on punishment. The love of Christ was displayed and the grace which Jesus supplies was emphasized when dealing with difficult situations.

In addition to our time spent volunteering at the school, Becky had arranged a jam packed schedule for us. We visited tourist sites and ministry sites including an art centre for children.

A real eye-opener for us was attending church. The first weekend we worshipped in a large tent where we sang familiar praise songs led by a praise team just like at home. A group of girls from Cory and Becky's school also led some of the praise

time. As we were leaving, another group of worshippers were arriving and Becky explained that there are about 10 different congregations who use the site. Many of them are refugees from African nations who choose to worship in their own language, with family and friends.

A second church we visited was having a Christmas bazaar in the courtyard at the same time as the worship service. Although Cory and Becky's school had a booth in the courtyard, we had time to join in the more traditional worship service at the church. Almost all of the worshippers were ex-pats from all over Europe and North America.

I would love to return to the school. Teaching the children is so essential. Not only are they being taught basic subjects but they are learning about Jesus and how to live a Christ-led life.

OPPORTUNITIES:

The need for people to serve at the school is great. The following volunteer positions need to be filled by:

- Teachers, to coach and mentor teachers and support computer classes
- Literacy Co-ordinator to support the daily guided reading program
- Volunteer Co-ordinator
- Nurse for student body and to provide hygiene training for students

If you, or someone you know, would be interested in serving at this school please contact our office.

Opportunities to Serve

The volunteer opportunities listed on this page are some of the ways you might serve the Lord in Canada and the Middle East through MECO Canada. If you sense God calling you to serve among Middle Eastern people, we would love to talk with you. Call our office: (905) 335-7329. Visit our website: www.mecocanada.ca

CANADA

Sports Program for Children and Youth

Serve in a Christian sports program based in Mississauga, Ontario.

Church Ministry

Assist Arab pastors with their congregations in Cambridge, Brampton and Toronto.



Syrian Refugee Outreach

Assist refugee families and individuals in the Greater Toronto Area. Assist with the development and implementation of programs for adults and children.

Outreach to Arab Women

Assist the founder of a ministry to Arab women living in Southern Ontario.

Middle East

Administration support staff and faculty for the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary

These are not paid positions. Support will have to be raised in order for you to serve.

Phonics/Literacy Coordinator

This position requires an educator who can assess students and determine what literacy support they require. You will also be working with teachers to establish the individual help students need.

Curriculum and Teacher Support

This position requires an educator who can assist teachers in using curriculum that is already available for their use, as well as locating and acquiring additional curriculum that is needed.

Teachers

Qualified teachers are needed for all grades. You will teach in English. Willingness to learn Arabic is important.

Donor Relations/Fundraiser

This position requires a person who has experience as a grant writer in English, as well as experience organizing fundraising events and tracking donors.

Assistant to Administrators of a Christian school



Opportunity to learn Arabic online

Are you one of those people who feel called to work among Middle Eastern people either in Canada or the Middle East? Do you need to learn Arabic?

A friend of MECO Canada, who was born and raised in Jordan, is willing to teach you Arabic (Levantine Dialect) through an online, interactive program he has developed. Endorsed by his church, our friend is offering his course free of charge to anyone wanting to serve the Lord.

"The course is very simple and user friendly and is divided into three parts," he explains. "Spoken language, which is used in verbal communication; Modern Standard Arabic, which will enable students to read road signs, read newspapers and participate in Bible studies; and Culture, understanding people, values and social structures.

"The third level on culture, is based on a book called, When in the Arab World by Rana F. Nejem. Students will have to purchase it through a bookstore or on Amazon."

Our friend notes that by teaching online he is able to remove all barriers that would prevent people from learning Arabic, such as traveling, time and expense. "I am using ZOOM which enables me to teach one-on-one or to a group of people. I can also share my screen at the same time and the classes can be recorded."

If you are interested in taking our friend's course, please contact our office at: mecan@on.abin.com or (905) 335-7329.