



True Vine Ministries

True Vine Baptist Church Newsletter—Volume 3, Issue 5

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Lebanon's Ongoing Migration Status:

According to UN sources, The number of registered Syrian refugees in the region rose to 5.26 million at the end of September 2017 as compared to 4.80 million refugees in September 2016. Children make up about 47.5% of the refugee population.

No official reports have been given on the migration status of refugees in Lebanon. Even though the visa restrictions imposed by the Lebanese government in 2015 are still in force, different sources reported several situations which show that the smuggling of Syrian refugees into Lebanese territories is still on the rise.

On the other hand, there is still no accurate information on the number of returning refugees; However, some recent reports show that there are some very few unofficial returns taking place.

Many of the refugees are still stuck in between. In Lebanon they do not have valid residency permits since their official documents either expired or were never done initially. In order to renew their permits, they need to return home to get their IDs renewed. Going back home to Syria is still technically impossible for many families. They do not have the needed official documentation to present at the borders to exit the country. In addition to that there still is the danger they might have to face whilst traveling to many parts within Syria. Many of them have to limit their movements within the Lebanese territories in fear of being arrested for lack of valid identification. This situation does not get any better with time. Many of the refugee children who were born in Lebanon do not have any identification and their birth is not even registered. Young men do not want to go back to Syria in fear of the fact that they might be obligated to take part in the Syrian conflict. *"How can we survive, we cannot work, we have no money, we have nowhere to go..."* these are just some of the daily cries that have robbed away the smile of both adults and children.

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A Very Happy Back-to-School:

The new 2017-2018 school year started with great enthusiasm as we welcomed back the 550 returning and new students, 1st of October. The voices of the children singing during chapel time is echoing back into the many floors of our church building. The laughter and voices of children playing during break time has filled the air with a joyful atmosphere again. We currently have 570 children that come to our schools and are spread in three locations. Our in-house school at the Church premises hosts 280 children. The Fayda Community Center hosts 120 children and the Ablah Center enrolls about 170 children. We are also very happy to have

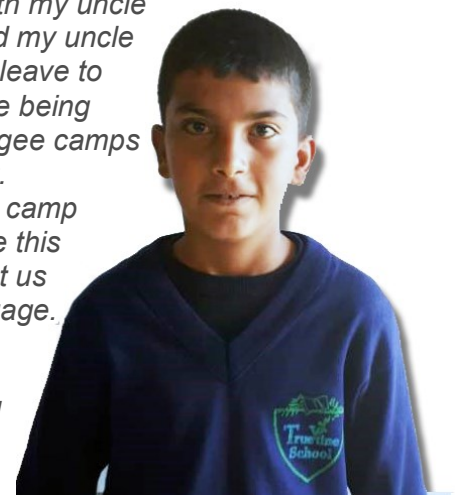


Our buses transporting students to their classes daily

re-started our “Wiping Illiteracy Program” for adults. The beginning of the school year was very busy. We distributed school supplies, school bags, books and stationary to all the kids. In addition to that, we provided them with school uniforms and made them ready for a new challenging school year. Our mission is to offer to those kids a positive learning environment that will provide them safety, stability, and an opportunity for a better future.

STORY OF OMAR :

Omar is an eleven year old boy currently in grade 2, studying at our Fayda Community Tent School. He comes from Adra, Reef Damascus in Syria. He has been In Lebanon since 2013 and this is his 2nd year at the tent school. He comes from a family of 4 children. Omar shared his story which goes as follows: *“My father was a carpenter. His workshop was hit by a bomb during the war and he died. ISIS came into our town and took everything. We first had to escape to a near place that is on the other side of the bridge. However, ISIS came soon to that region, so again we had to flee to Damascus and stay with my uncle and some relatives. But there were too many people living in that home and my uncle could not take care of all these people as he was poor. We then decided to leave to Lebanon. We crossed the border, arrived and stayed with my aunt. We were being supported by the UN. Later we had to move again and come live in the refugee camps in the Fayda area. One day, Miss Kifah and Miss Ango visited us in our tent. They asked us if we like to join the school in the community center near our camp site. So we did and started attending school immediately the next day. I love this school very much. What I like most about this school is that they do not beat us and the teachers treat us with love. My preferred subject is the Arabic language. Also, I really like the playground which is a great place for us to have fun and enjoy more of our time. It will be good if the school can add the number of classes and include more children in the program. I love the food they give us every day and my favorite meal is Fries with Ketchup. I wish they can fill the sandwiches more. I hope that one day the war in Syria will be over and we can go back home.”*



Health and Medical Care:

During October and November, we were able to provide over 4,000 health care consultations. We also provided most of the people who attended our medical clinics with needed medication. Several of these patients have benefited from monthly follow-up and treatment for chronic conditions. Over twenty patients received hospital care, some which were life-saving interventions. Medical consultations were held at the Church premises and at the community centers serving people living within the surrounding camps. We thank all of our medical teams that were with us from different parts of the world: USA, Brazil, and Germany. Over 50 medical doctors and nurses with different specialties volunteered during those days.



The German Medical Team.

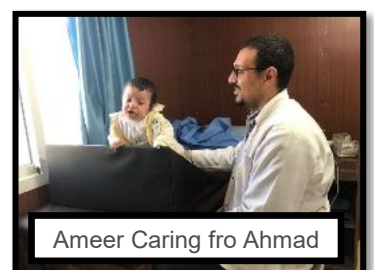
Daily Clinic Facility:

“A few months ago, we were asked to move to Lebanon to serve the Syrian refugees by offering medical care. Despite all the challenges faced, we started establishing the clinic with basic medical equipment. Step by step we experienced God's faithfulness and provision”, said Sarine, the head nurse serving, with her husband Dr. Amir, at the newly established daily clinic at our Fayda Community Center. Dr. Amir is also helping at the clinic in his capacity as a trained Physiotherapist. Since its inception three months ago, the clinic already served 910 patients. The different services currently offered at the clinic are: **Adult Physiotherapy, Pediatric physiotherapy, Pharmacy Consultation Room, Electro Cardio Gram, Assistive aid, Simple Lab tests, Fetal Monitoring, Wound Care and Burn care, Aerosol Therapy, Eye Clinic, Ultra-sound with triple Probes,** and of course **Spiritual Care.**



Stories from the Clinic:

Ahmad is Amir's first patient. He suffers from Cerebral Palsy. He has mental and Physical disabilities. His mother was desperate because of the “hopeless case” of her son, according to the evaluation of previous Physicians who examined Ahmad. Ahmad couldn't sit, turn or walk 3 months before. During Ahmad's first visit Amir discovered some positive reflexes and promised his mother that by God's grace and by intense sessions of Physiotherapy she will see some progress. And he prayed for Ahmad and for his family to have hope to see God's intervention. God answered the prayers and blessed Amir's effort. After 3 months of intense Physiotherapy sessions Ahmad can sit **without** assistance, as well as turn and stand up with some assistance.



Ameer Caring fro Ahmad

Winterization Program:

The distribution of winter assistance has already started. In order to be able to meet some of the refugees' additional seasonal needs, this project consists of the provision of core relief items specific to winter such as blankets, fuel vouchers, heaters, and winter clothes. This project began in November and will continue until the end of the cold season around mid-March 2018. We are very grateful for the many organizations and individuals that have stepped in to help us with the funding of this project.

Better-Life Team:

The four worship services that took place during a three days visit, made a great impact in the lives of the more than 2,000 people who attended the Better Life Team's praise performance. Among those who attended were 800 refugee children from different camps that we serve. The messages of love, faith, and hope they shared have lifted the hearts, minds and souls of the different audiences that attended.



Food Assistance Programs:

About 1,400 families still receive food assistance from our "Food Boxes Distribution Program". As part of our food aid, the "School Meals Program" still continues. This year we have decided to include all our three school projects, therefore, feeding around 600 children daily who are also part of our education program.

Retreat Day: On the 29th of September, and before the start of the new school year, the whole TVC ministry team got together for a day of training, prayer and fellowship. This gathering included all our full-timers, part-timers and volunteer from different departments. It started with a special devotion time by Pastor Jihad focusing on the importance of our work and how all our ministry units integrate together for the Glory of God. This was followed by a session on the importance of Team work and team building activities. After that, every leader from every unit shared their work, challenges, and hopes for the future. Special prayers for each group took place in turn ending with a nice fellowship time.



Our team of volunteers and full time workers during the one day retreat

Here Comes Santa: Our school kids celebrated Christmas with their teachers before going on a two-week break. The party took place at our Church premises and the 570 kids were divided into four gatherings. It started with a Christmas video, after which the children had great moments of learning and singing Christmas songs and hearing the true Christmas story. Our kitchen staff prepared some yummy hamburgers and French fries, The party ended with Santa Claus offering the children some delicious treats. It was a true joy to celebrate Christmas with our school children. Times like these are very much cherished by the children, some of whom had never even celebrated Christmas before.



Stories Shared from a Pastor's Diary:

One of our convert ladies came into the church and asked me to come visit them and lead her husband to Christ. He woke up this morning shouting, "*Lord save me*". When she calmed him down he said, "*He was here, couldn't you see Him! Christ was here*".

We visited them that evening and he shared about three dreams that he had this last period of time. In the first dream, he saw a man encouraging him to walk the way and introduced himself as John the Baptist. In the second dream, he saw Christ himself. In the third dream, someone was pulling him down and someone was pulling him up and then he woke up shouting "*Lord save me*".

"*Who is John the Baptist*", he asked. He never heard of him. My answer was that he was sent by God to prepare the way for the coming messiah and here again he came to prepare you for the coming of Christ into your life. In the third dream, it was clear that the devil was pulling you down into destruction and the Lord is pulling you up into salvation. It took us about one hour to answer his questions while trying to lead him to Christ. He then started coming to Church.

Her husband gave his life to Christ but still she could not believe that Christ is God. She looked in the Sunni teachings for answers to her questions. She did not find what she was looking for. So she asked God to send her a Shiite person hoping to give answers. She set a deadline for God. The last day arrived and God sent her a Shiite person who happened to visit Lebanon for a couple of weeks with our teams. He was not any Shiite person but a convert one who answered her questions and lead her to faith in Christ.

She approached me while shaking hands and asked me to baptize her with her son. It was the first time I saw her so I gave her an appointment to get to know her better and see where she stands in her faith. She came that Tuesday and shared her story. "I was walking in the street", she said, "and all of a sudden I found myself in a church with Christ standing in front of me. His light was like the sun which blinded my eyes. He told me about the conspiracy being prepared against that church and what was going to happen to it in the near future. To make me believe his words he took me into my parents' house, by spirit or not, I don't know, and he showed me certain things that happened a long time ago, fifteen years before I was born" It was not a dream but Christ in person appeared to her. She could not see for four hours. Christ hugged her and told her that he had chosen her to carry His name. She came to our country - a free country- and wanted to be baptized. Someone invited her into our church and from the first moment that she entered the church at worship time she realized that this is the place that she was looking for. She wanted to join discipleship groups and get baptized.

At exactly 8:30PM during last Tuesday's prayer meeting, one of the refugees asked us to pray for their neighbor's son who had a car accident and was in a coma. The following day they learned that at 8:30 PM exactly his heart stopped and he came back to life and completely recovered. He said that he could feel a hand passing over him with a healing touch.

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