

WORLD EVANGELISM FUND

Easter

OFFERING

NAZARENE CHURCH LAUNCHES IN CURAÇAO

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Curaçao, one of the “ABC islands” –Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao—off the north coast of Venezuela, is being introduced to the Church of the Nazarene. This is a story of new beginnings, for a country, for a young pastor and his team of church planters, and for an American pastor and his local church.

In 2010, the leadership of the newly-constructed Mesoamerica Region—formed out of the Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean Regions—took a hard look at itself. What they learned presented a challenge: the witness of the Church of the Nazarene was the weakest in the areas with the most population. Fifty-eight percent of the population of the region lives in 169 large cities and islands, but only 28 percent of the church membership is in those areas. This called for fresh thinking and a new strategy.



Hope springs from another factor. Across the region, a revival is occurring, with youth and young adults experiencing a call to missions. “We don’t need to rely only upon missionaries coming from North America,” they are saying. “Let us carry the gospel into these new areas.”

The Genesis Project is the region’s response. Twenty-eight large population centers are targeted to receive teams of four missionaries each by 2020. Missionaries Scott and Emily Armstrong in the Dominican Republic was named to develop the strategy and a training program.

The Dutch island of Curaçao presents its own challenge. The high cost of living makes it difficult for missionaries from Mexico or other parts of the region to live there. Yet, its diverse population of 150,000 needs the gospel. There are some 80 Protestant churches on the island, nearly all of them with memberships below 50. No Dutch-speaking evangelical church is proclaiming the message of heart holiness.

An international team is responding to this challenge with a strategy for planting a new Nazarene church on the island. Through divine orchestration, a team has come together to open the Church of the Nazarene in Curaçao:
Kevin Hardy, pastor of Crossroads Church of the Nazarene in Ellicott City, Maryland
Larry Orwig, Nazarene Missions International president at Crossroads
Richard and Karen Brash, members at Crossroads, and sensing a call to full-time ministry
Jonathan and Lissett Petrus: Young Dutch immigrants with a calling
Scott Armstrong, missionary responsible for development and implementing Genesis in Mesoamerica Region

Starting the partnership

Crossroads has a history of involvement in looking outside itself to participate in what God is doing. Crossroads planted two new churches in neighboring suburban cities: Alive Community Church in Elkridge and Connection Church in Arbutus. The launch of a third church is planned for next Easter, in Columbia, Maryland.

The same passion for impacting lives for Christ extended to cross-cultural missions, and they had shouldered a number of significant mission projects.

“As much as God is enabling our people to do,” Pastor Kevin Hardy said to Larry Orwig, his missions president, “I believe there must be another long-term challenge to consider.”



Orwig called Greg Taylor at the Nazarene Global Ministry Center to find a different model—a long-term partnership—that would directly involve more of the Crossroads congregation. Taylor said, “Get in touch with Scott Armstrong in the Dominican Republic and let him tell you about the Genesis Project.”

“We are going where the church is not yet,” Armstrong told them. “Half the world’s population now lives in large cities and that percentage is growing. Genesis is targeting those places where the Church of the Nazarene has a limited presence. We are training and deploying volunteer missionaries on two-year assignments to bring the holiness message to these urban areas and plant new churches. How does that sound to you?”

“Sounds good,” Orwig said. “Which cities and which islands?”

When Scott mentioned Curaçao, Larry stopped him. “I don’t know much about that place but I’ve been to Holland and I understand there’s a connection.”

“Right. It’s an independent country now, yet it remains a constituent part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. We are praying for a couple to go to Curaçao with a team and spend two years planting a new Nazarene church.”

On June 2014, Scott came to Crossroads and addressed the congregation. Thirty-five church members met with Scott and agreed to support a long-term partnership.

Seeing the vision

The following December, a vision team from Crossroads, including Richard and Karen Brash (photo left), arrived in Curaçao on a short exploratory visit. They met with Scott Armstrong and Dr. Alphonso Porter, field strategy coordinator for the Caribbean Field, and surveyed the island.

When the delegation left Baltimore, Karen Brash said to Richard, “Maybe we could consider this.” By the time of the trip home, God had spoken to her heart. “We’ll go!”

Immediately following the vision team’s initial visit, Scott Armstrong discovered Jonathan and Lissett Petrus, Nazarenes from the Netherlands, were residents in Curaçao and established email contact with them.

Soon after their marriage, Jonathan and Lissett moved to the south of the Netherlands where a friend invited them to visit the Church of the Nazarene. It did not take long to immerse themselves in the life of the church, leading music, working with the teenagers and finding nourishment in their own spiritual growth. The emphasis on the essentials of holy living resonated with them and for six years they enjoyed the fellowship of a vibrant church.

But Jonathan grew dissatisfied with the crowded urban living and his four daily hours of commuting. When relatives reported back from their move to Curaçao, the couple decided to follow them.

In the Netherlands, Jonathan believed God had placed a special call on his life. Going to a new home on a distant island did not change his sense of calling, but it took a few years to understand what God had planned for them.

Soon after the Crossroads delegation made its exploratory visit, Jonathan dedicated himself to preparing for the Church of the Nazarene to come to his adopted country. Richard returned to Curaçao in June and he and Jonathan officially registered the denomination in the island country, establishing it as a legal and permanent entity.

Starting small

Jonathan and Lissett began with a small Bible study group in their home and then rented a room in a Catholic school to hold services. Under the theme of “A New Start with Jesus,” Jonathan invites inquirers to come and learn, without any prior commitment to participating in the church.

“Don’t limit God,” says Jonathan. “Don’t limit His followers. Let Jesus be seen in you. This is about more than a private faith; it’s about serving God in the public realms of your life. It’s about raising up leaders and impacting our society.”

His current priority is reaching out to the Dutch-speaking population. The next step will be outreach to the 80 percent of the population which speaks Papiamentu, a Portuguese Creole spoken in all levels of society.

Jonathan will be licensed by the Dutch Antilles District. The couple anticipates the arrival of the Brashes coming on a two-year assignment starting in 2016, and to being mentored long-term by Pastor Kevin. Jonathan is grateful for the Genesis team, providing him with wisdom and guidance for his role in the new beginning.

Image “Churches who devote themselves and their resources only to their local community don’t realize what they are missing,” Hardy says (photo left). “They never discover the excitement of doing something great for God that unlocks His blessings and releases divine power exceeding human capacity. Doing more globally enables us to do more locally.”

Larry Orwig added that, “Since we took on the Curaçao project, Faith Promise giving at Crossroads has increased from \$60,000 annually to \$125,000.”

Enthusiasm for engaging in God’s work is evident in all aspects of the multiple ministries of the church. Crossroads people pray for a young Dutch couple on a small island, and they also pray that God will be glorified across their community and around the world as multitudes are brought to faith in Jesus Christ.

