

“I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH”

GOD’S CHOICE TO SAVE THE NATIONS

Christians around the world are responding to God’s calling to reach out to the lost, and especially refugees. Non-profit organizations have sounded the alarm and rallied millions of people into action, raising billions of dollars for humanitarian aid, development work, and evangelism.

We praise God for this outpouring of Christ’s love around the world! Yet, while the Church around the world is proclaiming the gospel and making disciples, the lion’s share of resources is going toward humanitarian efforts that often do not directly support the Church’s efforts.

At Horizons, we are determined to leverage our influence as a non-profit organization to

invest in the Church, rather than operating independently – because we believe that **the Church is God’s choice** to save the nations! This prayer letter is about how God is leading Horizons to partner with local churches around the world, to proclaim, disciple, and equip.



Thank you for your prayer and support!

- Pierre Rashad Housney
MENA Regional Director

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Throughout scripture, it is evident that the Church is God's chosen instrument to impact the nations with the gospel message.

It is called to be the light – shining in the darkness, and the salt – giving taste to the flavorless existence of all living apart from Christ. The more the local church is strengthened and equipped, the more it becomes capable to give life to all its surroundings.

However, surprising as it may seem, when we established Horizons' first center in Beirut, our leader, Pierre Houssney, felt that God was not calling us to be a church! But rather, God was calling us to collaborate with, strengthen, equip, and empower the Church to complete its great calling.



Food portion distribution among refugees



Visiting the President of the Evangelical Council of Lebanon



Pierre Houssney, sharing opportunities for support and partnership with the churches.

Through the grace of the Lord, we have seen much progress here at our centers in Lebanon.

As we began engaging with local churches, inviting pastors to preach and to "steal sheep" from our ministry centers and bring them into their congregations, we were successful in establishing trusting relationships.

Through the food portions that we offered to the churches, dedicated to be distributed primarily for those from a non-Christian background, they were encouraged to preach effectively to these people. They also have been distributing Bibles and audio Bibles that we provide to them for free.

At the same time, through these food portions, many refugees saw the giving hand of the Lord through this work; to reach them in their hour of need. Through this gesture of taking care of their physical needs, our partner churches were able to administer to their spiritual needs as well.

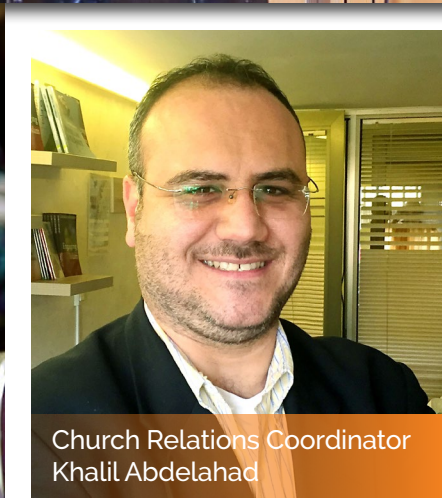
One Baptist Church in Beirut had no particular desire or even compassion to reach to the refugees of people from Muslim backgrounds. Yet through the food portions, they were encouraged to do so. Their eyes were opened to love these people, and now their church is thriving, and full of people with non-Christian backgrounds, who, through this act of kindness, themselves testify to the generosity of Jesus Christ!

"The Pastors' banquet was a historic event for the Church in Lebanon, as churches from multiple evangelical denominations joined together to partner with Horizons."

- Khalil Abdelahad,
Church Relations Coordinator



Pastors and their wives at the Horizons Pastors' Banquet on March 1st, 2017



Church Relations Coordinator
Khalil Abdelahad

Support in the Time of Need

Another church, in North Lebanon, had a member who was seriously injured and needed surgery. Horizons was able to aid financially in this crisis.

Now the person is well, and the whole church is encouraged, especially the Pastor of that church, who felt our support in the critical time of need for one of his members.

The trusting relationships we have formed with this and many other churches have given us a voice, with which we boldly challenge churches to get involved in the great commission, locally, nationally, and globally!

In addition to the material support, Horizons' centers in Lebanon have been providing many of the churches with free Christian discipleship curricula, according to their need.

Since 2012, we have been inviting members from local churches to training seminars called "Our Great Commission." These seminars have been equipping them with all the spiritual and practical tools they need to effectively reach the people around them for Christ.

Through the giving and supportive heart of Horizons in Lebanon, we have earned the trust of the local churches, who see us as a supporter and not a competitor.



- Boutros Wehbe,
Director of Field Ministries, Lebanon

MOBILIZING CHURCHES IN ALBANY, NY

Some people today question the role of the local church in reaching the nations for Jesus Christ. Some might see the church in the West as too insulated and absorbed in its own concerns to really care about the evangelization of the world. Others might feel that the task of reaching the world is complex and best left to professional Christian mission agencies, with the local church becoming simply a source of funding and prayer.

For the Horizons ministry team working with international students in Albany, NY, the local church is central to everything we do. **Most of the 2000 or so international students and visiting scholars who come to us are not Christians** and come from countries where it may not be easy for them to hear the gospel. In God's providence, He brings them here where they are surrounded by Christians and Christian churches. The challenge is how to mobilize the local church to reach these students for Jesus.

In Albany, our ministry is operated primarily by volunteers. Our local leadership team comes from about half a dozen different local churches, including Presbyterian, Lutheran, Catholic, and several independent congregations. This diversity reminds us that we represent the universal Christian church when we minister to the students, not just one local church or denom-

ination. It requires that we focus on the central doctrines of the faith that unite all Christians, rather than less essential doctrines that tend to divide.

We hold a series of dinners and other large group events throughout the school year. Most of these events are hosted by local churches. **The churches provide facilities, workers, food, logistical support, and other resources required to hold events that may draw more than 100 students and scholars.** This represents a tremendous amount of work that does not fall onto the shoulders of the Horizons leadership team. The pastoral staff and members of these congregations are encouraged to come out and interact with the students and are integrated into the programs. Our host churches really look forward to supporting and participating in these events.

We also offer opportunities for Christians from our church network to form one-on-one relationships with the students through a Friendship Partner program. We match one of two students with an American family or individual for a semester, school year, or longer. It's such a blessing to watch many otherwise ordinary Christians perform extraordinary ministry as they love and serve the students. Over the years, many have formed deep and lasting relationships with their students and some have seen students come to Christ.

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Horizons staff, volunteers, and international students in Albany



Volunteers spending time with international students in the tri-city area

When Students Become Christians!

Finally, when students become Christians we always encourage them to attend a local church. We provide discipleship, but do not baptize students (except in special circumstances). Rather we encourage them to be baptized in their local churches. The benefits go both ways. Recently one of our key churches experienced a very difficult change in leadership that left many in the congregation disheartened and discouraged. Several international students attended the church during that period and one became a Christian through the ministry of Horizons workers. We asked this church to baptize the student. That morning many Horizons members came to support the student. What an encouragement for the church to see new spiritual life spring forth in the midst of their difficult trial. What an encouragement for the student to see so many witness and support their baptism.

In John chapter 17, Jesus prays for unity among His followers. In first Corinthians 12 and other places, Paul expounds upon the diversity of gifts found in the church, the body of Christ. Both unity in purpose and diversity in gifts are needed if we are to reach the nations for Jesus Christ. This is certainly true for international student ministry and are best expressed as we develop strong relationships with the local church.

- Mark Harkness



BUILDING TRUST WITH N. AFRICAN CHURCHES

In 2015 we started seriously ramping up our ministry in a country in North Africa, after years of exploratory and foundational work by Georges Houssey. As always, our goal is to proclaim, disciple, and equip - however, as we learned from Georges and experienced on our own, many in this country are proclaiming faith in Christ, but very few of these are remaining in the churches for very long. So we chose not to start with evangelism, but rather discipleship.

Our Goal Has Been Simple...

...to reverse the trend of falling away, by grounding new believers solidly in the faith and helping the churches to retain them, care for them, disciple them, and equip them to reach others. At first, we faced fear and mistrust from the local church leaders, who saw us as wolves coming to steal their sheep.

However, month after month this perspective quickly started to shift when, through our perseverance and hard work, the locals began to see the purity of our motives - to simply help in any way we can. We spent considerable amounts of time just fellowshipping and counseling them, meeting individually with every single person the Lord brought to us. Many of these believers from a Muslim background had only heard the gospel partially. So we are discipling them, providing them with Biblical teachings according to their specific personal needs. We work in a way that's not just theoretical or philosophical, but also on a level that is applicable in their daily lives.

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Thus, many believers have been strengthened in their faith, and even were reconciled with, and established in, their local churches through our guidance. This in itself helped build bridges between us and the leadership of the local churches, since they saw that we were not only harmless, but constructive, edifying, and also filling up their pews!

"Who Are You?"

We also started seminars entitled "Who Are You?", in which many believers came to know their identity

in the Lord, as sons and daughters of the Most High, encountered the love of God, and were set free from many bondages.

One young woman who attended a meeting had many painful struggles in her life, and had only heard some minor things about Jesus. But during the teaching, she was overwhelmed with the love of the Lord, and with tears she asked Him into her heart. As we drove her home after the meeting, she began exclaiming that everything seemed different somehow - that even the trees along the road looked new!

She started seeing everything in a new, brighter light, as if a veil had been lifted. She started grieving over the lost years she spent apart from the Lord, and even though she is a new convert, immediately started to desire and work for the salvation of her family, saying "If only my Mom and Dad would come to Jesus now."

- H and J, North Africa Missions Coordinators



Ahmed Khamassi, meeting with church partners to coordinate events



A thanksgiving event at the Horizons House in Boulder, CO



André Houssey, speaking to international students

DISCIPLING STUDENTS IN BOULDER

We have had some exciting developments in the ministry among international students here in Boulder. As we have gotten more churches involved in hosting events for the students, we have been able to focus more on discipling international students who have given their lives to Christ. We have been focusing on encouraging them to reach other internationals. We currently have a weekly Bible study with residents at our student center, which international students from nearby campuses join as well.

Churches from all over the Denver metro area are getting involved, bringing teams of vol-

unteers to sponsor and serve at "Friendship Friday" dinner events that draw students from around the globe, including many Muslims.

These gatherings are inspiring spiritual discussions and we believe there are more to come.

Our vision is to equip believers to reach and disciple international students, and our strategy is to lead volunteers - both students and local church members - to do this by example.

For info about sponsoring an event, contact:

ahmed@internationalcrossroads.org



INTERNS IN BEIRUT – “BE” WITH THE CHURCH

“... And upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Matthew 16:18b

We strongly believe in investing in local churches. Numerous interns and groups come from all over the world; US, Canada, South America, the Middle East, and East Asia, visiting our centers in Lebanon, all with a heart to impact the community and reach the lost. One of the primary ways we train and facilitate them to accomplish this goal is by having them plugged in and integrated in a local church, where they get to know the people on a personal level. They build trusting relationships that provide the context for effective ministry alongside local believers. It is the local church that will irrigate and care for the seeds they planted after their departure.

There is a famous Zambian saying: *“Americans have watches, but they don't have time!”*

The truth of this thought echoes strongly with our lifestyles – in our packed and busy daily routines. However, analyzing the gloriously effective ministry of our Lord Jesus, we realize that more than anything, Jesus invested His life with his disciples; He lived with them, ate with them, laughed and cried with them, overcame obstacles, and taught through example, not just instruction – with compassion, not indifference.

This is what we encourage our interns to do, to just BE with them, to live and experience being a refugee, to experience being part of the church family, to

be mentally, emotionally, and physically involved in the actual reality of the people they are ministering to, and under this mantle share their lives and hearts with them, and even mutually learn and be edified in the whole process.

Through this truly intense and fulfilling hands-on experience of ministry for the interns, they go back to their homes trained and equipped as leaders ready to start ministries, for example, for refugees in their own local communities.

At Horizons International, when the time of departure for the intern has arrived, the successful interns are the ones who can answer “yes” to all three of the following questions:

- Was I a blessing to the national staff and national community?
- Did I preach the gospel effectively - or just accomplished a project?
- And finally, did I gain the heart of compassion and boldness to reproduce what I experienced here when I return home?

- Louis and Annie Liss, International Teams Coordinators



Horizons interns, walking the streets of Beirut

Want to
do more?

PRAY: sign up for daily or weekly prayer updates! main@horizonsinternational.org

GIVE: help Horizons proclaim, disciple, and equip! horizonsinternational.org/give

GO: attend or host a training event! Engagingislam.org