

Dear Ministry Partners,

You have read the stories, you have heard the reports, you have seen the pictures on the TV. For many, it is far away, somewhat unreal: tragic but distant. For others, such as those living in Austria, it is tangible, on our doorstep, in our face and in our hearts. In August, two additional Asylum seekers homes opened their doors in the district of Schwaz, Tirol to accommodate up to 129 asylum seekers. They were full from the word go, and in a couple of weeks, another home will open in a disused government building. Yet again, there will be no waiting, it will be full to capacity immediately. Staff turnover is incredible as the manager of one of the homes shared with us last week. Six new staff: all left within four weeks. Why? The stress on the staff is too unbearable, a stress exceeded only by that experienced by the refugees themselves as they come to terms with the tragic events of the past months. Yet they are content as the asylum homes offer at least some peace and temporary hope. It is here where the church must step in to introduce the needy to the one who is our everlasting hope: Jesus.

But let me introduce you to a couple of "real" people we are privileged to assist and share this hope with.

She was only a child herself, 17 years old with an 18 month old little girl and a baby to be born within days. Shrouded in black, the only color found in her eyes, which were haunted with fear and anxiety. At 17 she had already seen and experienced the evils of war more than most would in seven lifetimes. Having fled Latakia, Syria (Laodicea in Biblical times) a city and country ravaged with war, leaving behind the comforting arms of her own mother and father, she had hopes that she and her husband would find a land that would provide safety for their growing family. Passing through inhospitable and unwelcoming lands they finally arrived in Austria. Processing at the refugee camp went surprisingly quick and they were relocated to the St. Gertraudi Asylum Home.

Having been in country for a total of 30 days, she speaks no German or English only Arabic. As she shuffled up to the food truck, carrying a crying, teething baby, the strain on her face and back marked the nearness of the birth. She waited patiently as her husband bought what little food he could with the little money he had, desperate to feed his family. Around us children played, some playing with a soccer ball, others riding tricycles. Ava, our daughter, in the midst of them - laughing and playing, offering them hope and love. One little 8 year old boy Hasdam, was sharing a pack of gum with us all. His family had left all behind in Syria. He had nothing of his own and everything to

share. Whenever a child started to cry he quickly went and calmed the child with a word, a toy or a potato chip.



Hope lived within these people: hope for a better life - but these are early days for most of them. Their paperwork is still too new to have been stalled in the bureaucratic pipeline. Delays in processing that could last up to 7 years. Most have not been exposed to, or suffered the rampant discrimination so often felt. The Hope they have will not live long – sadly, experience tells us that it will quickly fade. Sadly it is not enduring, but: there is a voice of Hope they can and must hear, a Hope that brings life – a hope that IS life!

The writer of Psalm 72 speaks of this Hope, this reality: "For he (the righteous King) will deliver the needy when he cries for help, the afflicted also, and him who has no helper. He will have compassion on the poor and needy, and the lives of the needy he will save. He will rescue their life from oppression and violence, and their blood will be precious in his sight...." The righteous King is our loving Savior, the one who comforts us in our need, the one who delivers us, the one who has an abundance of compassion, our rescuer and deliverer. He is the one who gives hope when all else fails. And WE are called to be the "voice of Hope" to this dark and dying world.

So it is that we as individuals and as a church offer hope to those whose hope will soon fail. Our church members are active in meeting regularly with the refugees at the existing refugee homes to offer practical assistance, guidance, counseling. We seek to be involved in an even more structured manner in the soon to be opened home, to step in where the authorities are out of their depth. Our goal: to be A Voice of Hope, that points to THE voice of Hope: Jesus, our and their Savior.

Will you join us in this endeavor, by your prayers and financial support so that Jesus may be glorified in this new and ever increasing mission field?

For His Fame Among the Nations!
Daniel, Kathleen & Ava