



NOV-DEC 2019

del &
jeannie
penner



WELCOMING THE FOREIGNER,
ENCOURAGING THE CHURCH,
EQUIPPING THE NEXT GENERATION

CAFÉ INTERNATIONAL – 4 YEARS OLD AND GROWING!

Café International is only open 1 afternoon a week. It isn't really what you would imagine a café to be. We give away coffee and cake instead of charging money. People, mainly refugees from Somalia, Syria, Iran, Afghanistan, and Eritrea, come for many different reasons. It's a place to meet their friends, receive help filling out forms, tutoring for their language classes, or even to hear about a place to look for a job or find used furniture. That and lots more! The atmosphere is upbeat and some even refer to it as the Café International family. We keep thinking the needs will decrease and people will stop coming. Well, that's



A normal afternoon at the café.



Maria, the young Somali, is such a help to us in so many ways.

not happening! There are between 40 - 60 refugees who come every week. The majority are Muslims. We've learned the Muslim religion is as diversified as Christianity. Some of the women wear head coverings, some don't. Some men won't shake Jeannie's hand, because they won't touch a woman, others walk in and give her a big hug.

Recently we've had a whole new group of people move to our area from Somalia. They are our special challenge. Most of them are single moms with little children. There are some men, but not many. They love to talk to one another, have trouble learning German and most know no English. God has given us a connecting link. Her name is Maria, she's only 18 and is training to be a licensed practical nurse. The Lord has impressed on us to invest in this young lady. She's a good bridge between the Somali and German cultures and has the respect of the Somali women. Maria is here with her younger brother and feels a great responsibility to help with her 6 siblings that are still in Somalia. According to data provided by Pew Research, 99.8% of Somalia's population are Muslims. **Christians aren't welcome in Somalia, so God has brought them to us.** Now we are praying for open doors to share the Gospel as we demonstrate the love of Jesus to them.

PERSIAN MEN'S GROUP

When we first started the Café our goal was to live our lives in a way that would draw people to Jesus. There are times we've wondered: do people see a difference in our lives? Recently, Tamim and Puya, young Muslims from Afghanistan, came to Del and asked if he could help them learn more about the Bible and Jesus. When Del asked what had sparked their interest, Tamim said that he had observed our lives, that we were different. He also knew 2 young men who had converted to Christianity. One of these young men was Mahdi. Earlier Mahdi was part of a group we were leading. Ali became a Christ-follower



Del's Persian men's Bible study, that love to laugh together.

through observing the life of Mahdi. Del decided to start a discipleship group with Tamin and Puya and included his friend Reza. Reza is a young follower of Jesus with a Muslim background. He speaks German better than the other two, so he can help with translation when needed. Tamim and Puya know nothing about Jesus and the Bible and Reza knows a little, but not much. This is discipleship in its simplest form. For all of them, it has become one of the highlights of their week.

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THE PLIGHT OF THE KURDISH PEOPLE BECOMES REAL TO US.

The Syrian Kurds have made the news recently when President Trump withdrew US troops from the northern part of Syria. This area was mainly occupied by the Kurds who have been US allies. The Kurds are a people group numbering between 25 and 35 million people and make up the fourth-largest ethnic group in the Middle East. The problem is they don't have a homeland.



A map of where most Kurds are from.

This all takes on new meaning when you talk to Kurdish people themselves who are personally affected by what's happening. Here's a bit from our recent talks with 2 Kurdish families.

One evening we visited Fathi and Mona. Their oldest son and his wife are living in Afrin. That is the city in northern Syria that Turkey troops took control of the beginning of this year. In Syria, the Kurds have always been treated as second class citizens, but it has worsened. Kurdish civilians are killed, women are raped, access to food is limited and no travel is

allowed. People live in continual fear. Fathi said they are not ISIS, but treat the people in the same way. He and especially his wife, live in fear that their son will be kidnaped and held for ransom because his parents live in Europe. Their son will then be tortured or killed if the ransom isn't paid. When we asked why their son and his wife don't leave, he said that they can't travel. It's too dangerous to leave their village.

Mohammad and Sihan are another Kurdish family. They told us how difficult it is for them not to have a homeland as a people group. They're not welcomed anywhere. They are even afraid of some of the Arabs in Idar-Oberstein. How real this is, we aren't sure, but we need to take it seriously. The Kurds have always been mistreated and disdained. The stories they told were shocking! He apologized and said he didn't want to offend us, but he felt betrayed by President Trump for pulling out and leaving the Kurdish people alone to defend themselves. They compared their fate to that of the Jews.



Fathi and Mona live in Idar-Oberstein, but part of their heart is still with their family in Syria.

These are just stories from two of the families we work with. There are others. But there is a positive side. Although we have not yet seen Kurds start to follow Jesus, they are much more open to the Gospel than the Syrian Arabs. Mohammad and Sihan are very disillusioned with Islam and told us that Kurds are becoming Christians because of the way they are treated by more fundamental Muslims. We share our faith in Jesus and how He wants to work in their lives in these difficulties. They like it when we pray for them. Pray with us as we consider how we can better connect them to a loving heavenly Father through Jesus Christ where they can find a true home for their hearts. We as God's family also want to be an expression of God's love and acceptance of them.



Shrien and Mustafa are more conservative Kurdish Muslim friends.

In closing, thanks for taking the time to read this letter. We're looking forward to spending 3 weeks in the States. Thanksgiving will be with our son and daughter's families in Oklahoma then on to Washington State to be with our daughter and her family in Washington. On Dec. 12 it's back to Germany to spend Christmas with our son in Berlin. Wishing you all a happy Thanksgiving, a meaningful Christmas and a great start in 2020. God Bless You!

- del & jeannie penner

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