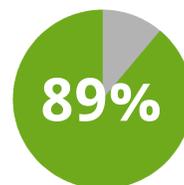


JOURNALS POSTED ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2018

Refugees in Bosnia and Herzegovina



LARRY & REBECCA
STANTON



SUPPORT PLEDGED



HUNGARY

This week, Pastor Zoltán Nyúl and I visited refugee camps in Sarajevo and along the western border of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Holy Spirit showed us the great needs and great opportunities to share the love of Christ with the refugees and our brothers and sisters (and non-believers) serving them.

We drove from Paçer, Serbia to Sarajevo and met Pastor Tomislav Dobutovic, the leader of the Bosnian Baptist Union. That evening we drove to the train station and talked with refugees about their situation. They are cold, hungry and tired. They sleep on the ground around the train station. They spend their days looking for places to charge their phones. That night we discussed the needs with the pastor. With winter coming, the most pressing needs are for food, blankets and clothing. The refugees are dressed for summer and will be grossly unprepared for the harsh Bosnian winter.

The next day Tom took us to a safe house, a building originally designed to be a hotel but left incomplete and has been repurposed for refugee housing. It now has 18 families—including nearly 30 children. They are providing a safe place to stay and food. They are searching for volunteers to teach English to the adults, to play games with the children and to help with the day to day needs of the home, like cooking and cleaning. An extended outreach of the group is providing food at train station, lunch and dinner daily. That evening we observed the dinner. It was orderly and fair, served with respect and dignity.



Serving refugees dinner at the train station in Sarajevo

Next we drove to Kladuška to visit an NGO I had partnered with in northern Greece. We spoke with camp coordinator Pixi about the needs at the camp. They are serving a couple hundred people and are in need of sleeping bags, tents, food, clothing and shoes for the winter. I have worked with him before and I think he has an incredible heart for refugees and a desire and ability to work in these difficult situations. He was part of a group last time that used the motto “We get sh*t done.” It was true. I like that.



Info point at the camp in Kladuška



Flatbread for feeding refugees

The situations both in Sarajevo and Kladuška are similar to what I saw the past three years in Serbia, Croatia and Greece. Now the refugees have moved to Bosnia to try to enter different border crossings, and unfortunately, the winters are even worse here. They anticipate very difficult times for the refugees this winter. We are asking our partners to join us in alleviating the plight of these refugees in Jesus' name and for His glory.



Tents set up in Kladuška, Bosnia. The fields around are studded with landmines from the war in the 1990s



Pixi and team SOS

As I have worked with refugees my question has always been: why do humanitarians like Pixi, a non-believer, feel compelled to serve these refugees—the very lowest of the low—living among them and living out Christ’s command in Matthew 25 to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and fellowship with the captives? Why does Pixi serve as Christ instructed us, while most of us, the Christians across the United States and Europe, turn a blind eye to these refugees? What are the implications for the church that non-believers are doing the work we were sent to do? I ask you to hold these questions in tension as I do and join me in searching out God’s heart and responding with faith and obedience.