

Neil and Kathy Vanaria

Ministering to Refugees in Sicily

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Dear Friends,

We are writing to let you know that we have been approved to begin working with the refugee population of Sicily. Our current departure date is planned for spring 2016.

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of people fleeing, persecution, poverty and violence in the Middle East and Africa. Tens of thousands of those fleeing make their way to the coast of North Africa where human smugglers charging exorbitant fees, transport their passengers across the Mediterranean to Sicily. There, the refugees are sent to camps, where they may apply for asylum.

The Challenges for the Refugee

Crossing of the Mediterranean is not only illegal but life threatening. Since the start of 2015, more than two thousand people have drowned while attempting to cross from North Africa to Sicily. The boats are often not sea-worthy and are terribly overcrowded. In April more than 800 people died when their boat capsized with hundreds of people locked below deck. For those who make it to Sicily's shores, life is incredibly challenging. Applications for asylum are long, with waits of 12-18 months common. With more than 200,000 refugees expected this year, the camps can no longer accommodate new asylum seekers. As a result, many are left to set up makeshift shelters on the streets and in parks.

Our Vision for Ministry

This is a time of tremendous challenge but also of tremendous opportunity. Many are coming to Sicily from lands where the gospel could not be freely preached. We are thankful that more than two decades in Papua New Guinea gave us experience ministering in a situation of extraordinary language and cultural barriers. The current crisis is an open door to demonstrate the love of Christ by providing not only assistance to meet obvious physical needs, but the opportunity to offer hope in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Timeline and Need

We believe Catania is the most strategic spot from which we can minister. Before being approved for departure we need to raise an additional \$2,000 in monthly pledges as well as purchase a vehicle so we can adequately minister to the needs of the refugee population. Our prayer is this can be completed by the end of April 2016.

In Closing

We are always thankful for your support and partnership and we welcome the opportunity to share at churches and with individuals and small groups who might be interested in participating with us in meeting this need. We're excited about this new direction and aware of the urgency of the need. Our website www.vanaria.org contains more information and as always please feel free to contact us with any questions you might have.

We are thankful for your partnership in the gospel,

Neil and Kathy

Neil and Kathy Vanaria

For gifts to the work:



**ASSEMBLIES of GOD
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(Please mark "For Rev. Neil Vanaria")