

## STORIES OF HOPE

*from Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM)*

These stories were compiled by CBM as 2020 drew to a close. During our Walmer worship service on January 10, 2021, we will be listening to these stories. I hope this manuscript helps you hear our CBM partners' words and engage with their message.



Jennifer Lau  
*Executive Director, CBM*

“Together we celebrate that despite the weariness of the world, particularly in a year such as this, Christ is alive and working to transform lives every day. As God’s mission people, what a gift it is to be part of that work.

## Beirut, Lebanon

**Arab Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS)**



Loulwa El Maalouf  
*Director of Partnerships, ABTS*

“On Aug. 4, a devastating explosion hit Beirut. Many people lost their lives and many more were injured and left homeless. Because of partners like Canadian churches, we were able to open our guest house, serve them, show them the love of Christ, and reach out to many more through local churches.”



Bassem Melki  
*Dean of Faculty, ABTS*

“One of the families we are helping is \_\_\_\_, a single mom for three boys. Her youngest, \_\_\_\_, has severe autism and is in a wheelchair. As he was on the balcony during the blast, the pressure threw him off and he grabbed with his

hands on the balcony's ledge. His mom as she stood up, was scared, ran, and saved him. He was miraculously saved.

“We had visited them and she couldn't believe that there are people who are willing to listen and pray with them and love them. We had helped fix their house. But most importantly, she experienced the love of God. One day, as we had helped [the boy] go to a special school (he was dealing with his trauma) the mom locked herself outside the house. The door had shut and she was waiting for [her son] to come home from school. (He had the key.) We did the visit on the stairs and I asked her, “\_\_\_ what would like to pray to God?” And she said, “I want Him to fill me with His love. I want the thing that you guys have.” And she accepted Jesus in her heart right there on the stairs with the neighbours going up and down the stairs. It was an amazing time and they said these are the happiest days of their lives. We praise God for what He is doing in this family's life.”



Rana Wazir Zailaa  
*Registrar, ABTS*

“Directly after the blast, we decided to open our building for people affected by the explosion. We prepared all the rooms, assigned a phone number for people to contact us, and put an announcement on social media. People who stayed at ABTS lost their homes and many of them were heavily injured. We provided accommodation, all necessities, including hygiene kits and clothing, and three meals a day. We had a medical team that checked on them on a daily basis. We had another team that visited them, listened to their fears, prayed for them, and provided counseling support for those who were traumatized, especially kids. Later, we helped these families in moving out by renting apartments for them or renovating their homes. We also bought them some home appliances and some furniture, in order to continue their life.”



Elie Haddad  
*CBM Field Staff, Lebanon*

“As you can see, the blast was devastating in Lebanon. But we’re thankful that so many people have responded, prompted by God, to help bring some restoration and some healing to people in Beirut. We’re thankful for partners like Canadian Baptists, who have come alongside us – CBM partners with LSESD (Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development), of which ABTS is one of the family of ministries, there are many responses to the blast, supported by CBM. This is only one example of our response. Thank you so much.”

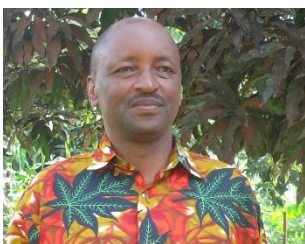
## Central Africa



André Sibomana  
*CBM Field Staff, Rwanda*

“This December, one of the CBM partners in Congo – the Community of Baptist Churches in Central Africa (CBCA) – have been ordaining ministers (new pastors). In one month they ordained 81 pastors. People who are committed to serve God. We know Congo has been a place of conflict, Ebola, and now, at this time, COVID-19, like elsewhere in the world. But the churches are still committed.

“The second story is about another denomination in the DRC Congo. This is a new CBM partner – the Community of Baptist Churches in Eastern Congo. This denomination has been in conflict for the last 21 years. Too many ethnic groups were not able to agree how to share the leadership positions. There has been no reason to spread for the last 21 years. Those leaders approached CBM and they asked if CBM could accompany them to work toward unity and reconciliation and bring both groups together to work together, worship together, and live together. So our colleague, Gato Munyamasoko, who is CBM peace and reconciliation specialist for Africa agreed – accepted with passion – to join in that denomination. For the last 12



*Rev. Gato*

months, Rev. Gato has been training the staff from the office – the executive leaders – to teach us and the pastors about the models of peace and reconciliation, with very important topics like celebrating our differences, conflict management, repentance, and others. We have been hearing feedback from the leaders and those different groups of trainees, saying that they’re ready to work together; they’re ready to come together again. They are ready to work together as a community and witnessing again their unity as a church. There is still work to do, but we see already God is at work convincing those people from different ethnic groups that, for the sake of the Kingdom, they need to come together to witness that the cross can unite them; the cross can bring them together as they live in Shalom.”

## **Thailand**

### **Thailand Bethel Theological Institute**



Fiona and Conrad Kwok  
*CBM Field Staff, Thailand*

“March and April is the summer holiday of the school. The students went back to their hometown – most of them (50% of the students) to Myanmar – and then in April came the new school term. Unfortunately, at that time the pandemic also started. Because of that, the border of Thailand and Myanmar are closed and so the students are stuck in their hometown and they cannot return to the school to study. A lot of them are located in the mountainous region in Myanmar and they don’t have electricity; they don’t have stable wifi internet. So it is really hard for them. They only have a cell phone to go on-line and study. So it is really hard for them to study. Some students started thinking they would quit this semester and wait until COVID is over and go back to school to learn.

“At that time we sent a prayer letter to all the churches in the region and asked them to pray for us and pray for these students. Most of the churches’

pastors are our alumni, so they responded very positively. They were saying, “Why don’t you send them to our location? We are in the city. We have stable internet. We have electricity. And we can even feed them and let them sleep in our church so that they have no worry about studying.” So many people see the hope at that time. We are really thankful that these alumni are willing to step up and help the younger students. So now they are all located in different locations. And then in the morning they can gather together and learn and go on-line and they can focus on studying. During this very difficult time, we can see that God is in control. We really praise the Lord for that.”

## Latin America



Bruno & Kathleen Soucy  
*CBM Field Staff, Latin America*

“Greetings from Bruno and Kathleen Soucy, serving Canadian Baptist Churches partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. We have been privileged to work with dynamic, faithful leaders and evolving future leaders. Seeing God at work in their lives and ministry in the community gives us hope. These are people who use their God-given gifts, often developed in difficult situations, and have the courage to step into life and are living God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.



“Gladys Ortiz is the President of the Association of Baptist Churches in El Salvador. She’s a pastor and an educator and a masters student. She has a vision and personal mission to be an instrument of God in the development of leaders and members of Baptist churches in El Salvador, providing encouragement and training to church leaders and programs that improve the competence of volunteers, gives leaders tools to strengthen Christian and theological education, and develop ministries that respond to the priority issues of the churches and communities.

“Gladys says, ‘God called me with a purpose and everything is part of a process that He carries out for His glory. This has helped me to keep my dream alive of creating a ministerial programming initiative, which promotes Christian education and social action of the Baptist Churches in El Salvador.’

“Gladys is actively engaged in developing young leaders. A priority for her is to preach a gospel of love in action, sharing and serving where God has placed each person. Gladys’ counsel to young leaders includes nurturing creativity, living in God’s grace and teaching that grace to others, growing through mistakes, promoting teamwork, and building trust.

“We’ve seen Gladys build unity among the Baptist churches in El Salvador and foster a culture that is moving the church outside its walls and into the community. Today the pandemic has afforded many opportunities for the church to love and serve their neighbours, including those they do not know or have little in common with. They do this by providing food, medicine, soap, masks, and most of all, their time and their presence. This adventure into the community has brought the church into collaboration and engagement with local authorities and community leaders to work out how best to support their communities.

“So we thank God and our Canadian partners for the privilege to engage you with and learn from our southern partners. We pray that you will be blessed in all your ministry investments both locally and globally.”

## **Canadian Baptist Ministries**



Adrian Gardner  
*Director, Canadian Partnerships*

“Our God we thank you for this world which You have created – the world that You love, this world which You have redeemed at great cost through the gift of Your Son. We thank You, Lord, for Jesus and the full, abundant, never-ending life we can experience in Him. We thank You, Lord, that You loved the world so much, You sent Your Son.



We acknowledge today that this world is broken and weary under the weight of COVID-19, injustice, poverty, and conflict. We thank You, Lord, that in the midst of this brokenness and weariness we can rejoice because in Christ You are making all things new. The light does, indeed, shine in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. In this world we will have trouble, but we take heart because You have overcome the world.

Today, Lord, we pray for Your Church. Your Church here in Canada: may You continue to show each local church how best to reflect the light of Christ in their village, town, or city. Empower us, Lord, and strengthen us by Your Spirit, we pray. Give us hearts for the poor, the broken, the marginalized, the other. And Lord what we pray for the Church here in Canada we pray also for the Church around the world. We thank You for these exciting stories of hope we've just heard from our global partners. Continue to strengthen them and empower them as we walk side-by-side in partnership. Lord, we thank You that all over the world Your gospel is growing and bearing fruit. Lord Jesus, we need You. Fill us anew with Your presence and the power of Your Holy Spirit.

“We pray together now, Lord, as You taught us to pray saying,

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be Your name;*

*Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven;*

*give us this day our daily bread;*

*and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors;*

*and do not lead us into temptation,*

*but deliver us from the evil one.*

*For Yours is the power and glory and the kingdom forever and ever Amen.”*