

Jinishian JOTTINGS

...from poverty and despair to self-sufficiency and hope

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Is God with us?

Eliza Minasyan, executive director

After seeing the news that the last children's hospital in Aleppo has been destroyed, we might wonder if God has abandoned Syria. Here's a hopeful report to prove



otherwise. Read about a family making a life against the odds and how one refugee is rebuilding his life in Lebanon. The Jinishian Memorial Program has served within these communities for 50 years, and we are not leaving now. No trouble today will destroy our faith. Indeed, God is with us. As this year comes to a close and we welcome the Christ child again, may his love so shine in us that all the world will see it is so.

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ARMENIA
in October 2017.

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800-728-7228 x5291.

How to respond to Middle East Christians in need

Awareness of Jinishian's work is growing, but so are the needs. This year's annual appeal supports emergency aid in Syria, refugees in Lebanon and the women's health project in Armenia. Our dedicated team is ready to put your gift into action. Keep spreading the word! We thank all those who support this ministry with such heart. For more practical projects for your family or church see the giving catalog at pcusa.org/jinishian. Give directly to the annual appeal now at pcusa.org/donate/E051792/

When leaving Syria is not an option



In a besieged corner of Aleppo, Shahe became a victim of sudden blindness. And with the loss of sight, he also lost his only source of income as a dental technician. He and his wife, Talin, struggled to stay in their house—vulnerable though it was—but the monthly payments were a great challenge. As parents, Shahe and Talin faced additional struggles. Although their oldest son was excelling in school, their younger son needed special care for autism. The care their younger son had been receiving from a wonderful Armenian institution would soon end as the school was closing, another casualty of war.

Shahe's family is just one of thousands of Christian Armenians who remain in Syria and for whom fleeing is not an option. This land is home to four generations of genocide survivors. They have not forgotten the blood poured out in these desert sands.

Shahe's eyes needed treatment to regain his sight. Shahe's soul needed a sense of dignity. When his wife, Talin, came to Jinishian for help, Shahe resisted the idea of accepting aid that he could not earn.

Sometimes rescue comes first and hope follows.

Before his eyes were healed, Shahe began to see that by receiving a gift he could not repay, he would be freed to do his work. Then those in greater need than he might find help and hope as well. Shahe said "yes" to Jinishian's financial assistance toward their otherwise insurmountable housing and medical expenses.

Talin and Shahe went to the dental laboratory each day, working hand in hand as he recovered his vision and his confidence. Jinishian also found a new place for their young son to go twice a week: a Christian agency offering special care for autistic children. Their oldest has continued winning school awards and competitions. Talin felt her burdens as wife and mother lifting.

"We thank God that now we are in a better place," Talin told the Jinishian team. "Without you we could not survive all these difficulties in wartime."

Syria has lost almost half its population in this war, yet many who remain believe the cost of fleeing is too high. With your help, our work makes it possible for these Christians to remain in their homeland—not merely to survive but to live, keeping faith in community.

Three reasons to make a gift today

Christians are leaving the Middle East. The No. 1 way to keep Armenian Christians in their homeland is to support strong communities. With 50 years of experience in five countries, the Jinishian Memorial Program has a proven plan for the long term. And our emergency relief funds are helping refugees stay secure and close to home.

95 percent of your gift directly benefits those in need. The more partners join us, the greater the program's impact will be.

Get at the root of it. You want to bring hope and help to those trying to overcome poverty. Sharing God's love and addressing economic and social problems are what the Jinishian Memorial Program does best.

He left his son in Lebanon, then found his mother and wife dead

In Lebanon today tensions abound because of distrust between Lebanese and Syrian citizens. There is one Syrian for every four citizens in Lebanon, which doesn't help ease the tensions in this small country. Unless that one Syrian is Mardig, a young man quietly putting diapers on the elderly or nursing them after surgery. When Mardig first walked into the Jinishian office, he looked more like he was in need of care himself, rather than seeking a job as a caregiver. He was covered in tattoos and had no possessions at all, no home and nothing to eat.

"If I had judged him on appearance, I would never have sent him to work," reflected Jinishian social worker Sevan Ishkhan. "When I asked his marital status and number of kids, it was heartbreaking to see tears falling down his face."

For the last six years of Syria's war, Mardig had placed his young son in school at the Armenian Orthodox monastery in Bikfaya, Lebanon for safety, while he remained in Syria with his wife and mother.

"One day he came to visit his son," Sevan recounted. "When he returned home, he found his mother and wife dead under the fallen walls of his house. He said, 'Imagine losing two most valuable people on the same day—your birth-giver and your son's birth-giver.'"

Sevan began sending Mardig out to care for the elderly. "He is now a great nursing caregiver working in our community." She is proud to see the young man, once so desperate, earning a living and beginning to recover: "He was blinded by life, but through the employment office we were able to let him see the beautiful sun every morning."



Mardig is one in a million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Jinishian serves hundreds of them each year (in addition to thousands of local beneficiaries). In a time when so much is being taken away from families in the Middle East, know this: the more you give, the more we can help, and the more they give back.

Why breast cancer claims the lives of more Armenian women

When a mobile medical clinic arrived in the tiny village of Arpunk offering free health screenings to women, they found Karine Petrosyan. Day and night, pain gripped her abdomen. Massive fibroids were silently consuming her uterus. Karine needed emergency surgery. In this remote corner of Armenia, there was little to no access to routine cancer screenings until Jinishian began a reproductive health program in 2016. Without early screenings such as mammograms, breast cancer can be deadly, making mortality in Armenia among the highest in the world—a devastating toll that Jinishian is determined to reverse, one village at a time.

The Jinishian Memorial Program chose to partner with Maple Leaf medical services to focus on the area around Vardenis first—a deeply poor, volatile border zone with Azerbaijan where birth rates are low. In two dozen

visits, the clinics reached nearly 600 women like Karine, 90 percent of whom had some form of gynecological disorder.

Karine was swiftly transferred to the hospital, where doctors removed her invasive fibroids. She was far from an isolated case. Hers was one of sixteen vital surgeries. Women desperate for medical intervention finally had an advocate with the expertise to shepherd them through Armenia's complex healthcare system. The program was funded solely through our Jinishian donors, with only \$42 covering each initial life-changing exam.

Three cancer patients are already identified and have begun treatment plans. Astonishingly, thyroid disease was found in a quarter of the women. Prescriptions and follow-up care are included in the program.

Having seen in just a short time how many women will live longer,



healthier lives as a result of this pilot program, Jinishian is committed to continuing and expanding it. This can only happen with your help. Please consider a small gift today that can truly save a life.

God is at work among Armenian communities, bringing dignity and hope out of poverty and despair. You are invited to be part of this mission.

The Jinishian Memorial Program addresses the needs of the whole person—social, economic and spiritual—with projects ranging from emergency aid to long-term development. Drawing on a half-century of experience, we also adapt and innovate, adjusting priorities according to particular conditions in

Armenia, Lebanon and Syria, as well as Istanbul, Jerusalem, Nagorno-Karabakh and Georgia. This year, we celebrate 50 years of 100 percent local mission. As a program supported by an endowment fund of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and advised by Apostolic, Catholic and Evangelical local board members, we serve struggling Armenian communities through transformational faith-based projects. Jinishian is a recognized leader in creative, sustainable change.

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