

Journey

LIVES AND COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMED BY THE POWER OF GOD

THE Joy OF SERVING 20 YEARS OF SYDNEY REFUGEE TEAM

This year marks 20 years since the Sydney Refugee Team was formed. Over the years God has brought joy to the lives of many families and to the stream of faithful Christians who have served in this ministry.

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.” (Matt 25:40)

Jesus and his family fled from danger to Egypt soon after he was born. As strangers in an unfamiliar country Jesus and his family would have needed help. When we remember that Jesus was a refugee himself, it gives his words in Matthew 25:31-46 a whole new perspective.

Caring for those in desperate need

is clearly very close to Jesus’ heart. Under God, the Sydney Refugee Team (SRT) has sought to live and love like Jesus by serving people seeking asylum for the past 20 years.



Martha, her husband and their four children fled war in Sudan and arrived in Australia in 2004.

“It was very hard looking for housing, but then we met Reuben Singleton from the SRT, who helped us find a place to rent,” Martha recalls.

Every situation is in God’s hands – he has planned everything. There was a period when I was very sick. After I had surgery, another SRT

member, Linda Goldthorpe, helped with the kids’ homework and prayed with me.

“We became citizens in 2007. I am now attending Quakers Hill Anglican Church and doing a course in evangelism.”

“ Every situation is in God’s hands – he has planned everything. ”

Linda Goldthorpe, who has been part of the team for the past four years, says, “joy comes when you see how the help has made a difference in someone’s life. Sometimes this will be a person commenting that we answered their prayers by bringing food. Other times, it will be seeing people grow in their faith and understanding of the Bible, or a

child telling you they received a reading award at school."

Gabrielle* and her family left the Middle East and arrived in Australia via Indonesia in mid-2013.

"We are on a bridging visa and were without permission to work until late 2015," explains Gabrielle.

"The SRT helped us a lot. We also really enjoyed the Family Weekend away.

"My husband was a businessman in our country. He is now doing Uber driving.

"In my country we could not change our religion. After we left, my husband had a dream two times, where Jesus said, 'come to me, my paradise, you are in the

desert. When we came to Australia we went to church and soon after we were baptised. I was anxious before, but I am more at peace now.

"I used to be a mathematics teacher, so I'd like to improve my English and go to university."

Team Leader Karl Hochstetter says, "It is great to journey with people from other cultures as they learn about life in Australia... And we learn as much as they do!

"It is a joy being able to give to others and to see people gain confidence and become more independent. And it is also a great joy seeing people come to know Christ.

"We love seeing the delight on faces at our family weekends and hearing comments like, 'this is the best time we have had since we arrived in Australia six months ago.'"

"It can be a burden to know that there are many difficulties that people experience, that we are powerless to do anything about," says Karl.

"And even in the areas where we can assist, it can be a challenge to balance people's needs with the resources that we have."

Although most of us will never know what it is like to be displaced, it is amazing that our Saviour, Jesus Christ knows exactly what it is like.

As we face the worst refugee crisis since the World War Two, please pray for those who have been displaced and that the SRT will continue to serve faithfully by demonstrating unconditional love to refugees in Sydney.

* Name changed to protect privacy.

Sydney Refugee Team - The Back Story

God has been powerfully at work from the very beginning of the Sydney Refugee Team. We spoke to some of the people who have played a key role in this ministry since it began:

Former Directors of International Teams Australia, Andrew and Janice Collins reflect on how the ministry came about 20 years ago.

"In 1995 we received an email from an International Teams missionary in Austria. A young girl who had been in her Kid's Club refugee ministry in Austria had written her a letter. The girl had written to say how much she missed the Kids Club," says Janice. "It turned out that the girl and her family had been received into Australia as part of the refugee program. So we

followed up the girl, which led to our first connection with Bosnian refugees in Australia. From that point on Andrew knew there was an opportunity for refugee ministry in Australia, and he began the search for an experienced worker who could pioneer the Sydney Refugee Team."

"Canadian, Judy Dickinson arrived in May 1996 to start the team, and others joined her in 1998."



Want to make a difference?

RIDE for Refugees



- Sydney 27 August -

- Toowoomba 3 September -

- Brisbane 10 September -

Register online today!

www.rideforrefugees.com.au

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VOLUNTEER



Reuben and Sarah Singleton joined the team after the Olympics in November 2000.

"We had heard that Villawood Detention Centre was where many asylum seekers were being sent. We made contact with a local church group that was running a Sunday service there and joined them for our first ever visit to a detention centre," explains Sarah.

"We worked with a range of local churches of various denominations, who already had some refugees or asylum seekers in their church.

We also created a volunteer training program. It was fantastic to see how the relationships grew and how God opened the right doors at the right time for our team.

"One moment I will never forget is standing with a refugee family on Mona Vale beach shortly after they had been released from Villawood Detention Centre. To walk along the sand and wander in and out of the waves, to see the horizon go on forever – these were all things that this family were not sure if they would ever get to see or experience," recalls Sarah.

Sally and Brendan Jones led the team from 2010 to 2013.

"The most encouraging thing is to see so many more churches actively engaging with refugees and asylum seekers now – in the early days it was harder for us as a team to get them involved," adds Sally Jones. "I hope it continues to grow."

Numerous lives have been touched through the passionate leaders and volunteers who served so willingly and practically; whether it was organising social activities, advocating, finding accommodation and furniture, helping people understand the processes in Australia or ensuring they could get to important appointments. In doing this

they were able to demonstrate and share the message of God's unconditional love for them.

God provides and came through for the team time and time again. His hand was in even the tiniest details, which began with a young girl's letter.

ANNUAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

22 October

Speaker: Stephen Morse

Human trafficking intervention in Spain

8am-9.30am
Castle Hill Baptist Church
13 Showground Road, Castle Hill

To register go to
www.iteams.org.au

Dates for 2016

Mark these dates in your calendar & join us:

- 15 Aug Monthly Prayer Meeting
- 19-20 Aug SRT Volunteer Training
- 27 Aug RIDE for Refugees Sydney
- 3 Sept RIDE for Refugees Toowoomba
- 10 Sept RIDE for Refugees Brisbane
- 19 Sept Monthly Prayer Meeting
- 14-15 Oct SRT Volunteer Training
- 17 Oct Monthly Prayer Meeting
- 22 Oct Annual Prayer Breakfast

Go to www.iteams.org.au for more information about these events and more.

Opportunities to Serve **NOW**

- Part-time volunteer journalist to assist with Journey Magazine

There are ongoing opportunities to serve in a range of ministries overseas, and in Australia with refugees and asylum seekers, and end slavery ministries.

We would also love to be a part of your journey as you explore how God may be leading you to serve. Please contact us if you'd like to talk and learn what is involved in serving with International Teams or visit our website for specific opportunities.

iteams.org.au/get-involved/go/current-vacancies

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY

To ensure the work of International Teams continues well into the future, we ask you to consider including us in your will. It doesn't matter how big or small your bequest is, this is a simple, yet significant, way that you can support our mission beyond your lifetime and leave a lasting legacy for future generations of marginalised people to be reached with the Gospel.

For more information or to receive a bequest pack, contact our Partner Relations Team on 02 9890 2244 or email partnerships.au@iteams.org

International Teams

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Sign up to our e-Journey List to receive your Journey newsletter online, and more regular updates about news and events from International Teams.

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Design: Amy Gempton

PEOPLE UPDATE

David & Emily Field - Austria

Praise God with David and Emily for their marriage on 7 January this year. We rejoice that Emily will finally be able to join David in Austria in August.



Praying with us

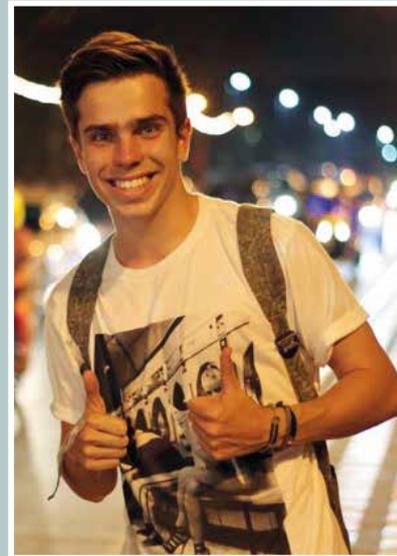
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Stephen & Sarah - Spain/Australia

Stephen, Sarah & Arabella have arrived back in Australia & will be here until July 2017. Please contact us if you would like to catch up with them or have them speak at your church and share about the End Slavery ministry in Spain.



SHORT-TERM MISSION



Jono Swanton, from St Matthews Anglican Church, West Pennant Hills, is serving on a short-term mission at The Oasis, Austria, from July to September.

Why are you going to serve at the Oasis?

I really want to see God work! God is working everywhere and is constantly working in lots of different ways. From my experience, I've found that I feel most intimate with God in situations where I am challenged physically, culturally and spiritually and truly need to place my trust in him.

I see my time at the Oasis as a great opportunity to challenge my faith, learn from the team working there, as well as the refugees and patrons of the centre, and observe how God is working in a different part of the world.

REACHING OUT TO WOMEN

Irene has been volunteering with Street Light, a ministry that involves visiting brothels, and building relationships with the women who work there, for nearly two years. We asked Irene a few questions about herself and her heart for women in need:

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

I love reading, doing jigsaw puzzles on cold wintery days, cooking, walking, exploring new places and coffee, I love coffee!!! Oh and my kids and grandkids – they are a delight so I just love spending time with them.

Describe your relationship with Jesus.

I am so thankful to Jesus for the way he loves me and has been good to me. He has never ever let me down and I know that I can trust him with my life and the lives of my family and others I care about. The more I get to know him the more I love him. I love that he wants to have a personal relationship with me and he sees more good in me than I see in myself.

What inspired you to join Street Light?

I really felt God calling me to minister to women. I am a relational person so I love to chat and spend time with people. This ministry is close to my heart because it's close to God's – he sees each of these women as precious and loved.

Looking into the future, can you see where God is leading you?

I'm so excited about where I am heading in the near future. God has put a longing in my husband's heart and mine to move to Bangkok, Thailand to help bring restoration to women and men whose lives have been affected by the sex industry.

