

Befriending Bethlehem Believers

Three dozen adults from Christian Reformed churches across North America traveled to the West Bank in Palestine this past summer to encourage Christians there.

Led by Bart and Pat DenBoer of Calvary CRC in Holland, Mich., and Jeff and Karen Blamer from Third CRC in Kalamazoo, Mich., group members hailed from British Columbia, Ontario, Washington, California, Ohio, Iowa, and Michigan.

They served alongside believers in Bethlehem, working at a refugee camp, helping local farmers, assisting at medical clinics, and more. They also worshiped with Palestinian Christians.

Marcel DeRegt, youth pastor at Cornerstone CRC in Chilliwack, British Columbia, said the trip, organized by IDEA Ministries, changed his mental image of the area. "It took all my childhood



PAT DENBOER

Dining with a Palestinian Christian host family are Doug Depies from Milwaukee, Wisc., Karen and Jeff Blamer from Kalamazoo, Mich., and Bart DenBoer from Holland, Mich.

imagery of Bible stories and shattered it—the trip rebuilt the stories," he said.

Pat DenBoer said she now has a greater understanding of the culture and geography of what used to be "just names" in the Bible.

Jeff Blamer recalled watching a farmer in the West Bank being

squeezed out by Israeli settlements. "It was heart-wrenching," he said.

"The very presence of other Christian believers from around the world encourages these Palestinian believers," said Bart DenBoer.

—Karen Gorter

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Iowa Church Feeds Starving Children

For the second year in a row, Trinity Christian Reformed Church of Rock Valley, Iowa, bought and packaged meals for the Feed My Starving Children organization.

Brenda Beernink and other members of the church's outreach team had seen photos of starving children in magazines and television commercials, but they wanted their effort to be an outreach to their own community.

So members of the outreach team fanned out, inviting



(l-r) Chloe Koedam, Brady Faber, Clay Van Tol, Nicholas Kooima, and Melinda Faber helped package meals for starving children.

churches, schools, community clubs, and nearby Western Christian High School to participate.

Collection jugs were distributed throughout the small town. Rock Valley Christian School's eighth graders grew \$200 of "seed money" into \$5,500 for the project.

Together, the groups raised enough money to provide 125,000 meal packets, which consist of a mixture of rice, soy, vegetables, and a vitamin and mineral vegetarian chicken flavoring mix. A single bag provides one meal for six children for one dollar.

Volunteers did the packaging over a period of three days. "People throughout the community came," said Rev. Mark Beernink, Trinity's church life pastor. "If I walked in there on a given afternoon when they were packaging, I probably didn't know fifty percent of the people," he said. "It was an intergenerational ministry; it said we're kind of all in this together," said Beernink.

"It's such an easy way to do hands-on," said Brenda Beernink. "When everyone chips in it is amazing what you can do," she said.

—Sherry Kooiker