

Building Walls... and Bridges



Daniel Kirchhevel (USA)

“Never in a million years did I think that I would be installing a new kitchen in Jerusalem with a Canadian in an Ethiopian Jewish home or spreading tar on the apartment block roof with two Australians and a guy from Japan!”—a BFP volunteer from South Africa.



Home Repair Manager Rob MacIntyre (New Zealand)

OUR HOME REPAIR PROJECT is a very special project that shows God’s love to the people of Israel in very practical ways. Skilled workers from all over the world come to share their talents with the needy in Israel by repairing their homes that have been neglected because of lack of funds. Many we help are new immigrants or elderly. Some are Holocaust survivors.

The program started in 1993 when Carl, a volunteer from the United States, was sent to deliver food to a soup kitchen we assist. When he arrived, Naomi met him with a request. “Please go and deliver food to Yehuda. He hasn’t come to get food for three days, and I am worried about him. You see how short-staffed we are. I have no one to send.”

So, Carl took off with the food, following Naomi’s detailed directions through the twisted narrow streets of Mea Shearim, a religious neighborhood in central Jerusalem. When he arrived, he found Yehuda lying in bed sick. The bed was awkwardly placed in the center of the small one-room apartment in a futile attempt to avoid dripping from the leaky ceiling. The walls were black with mildew, and there was no heat and no kitchen cupboards.

Carl was shaken by the appalling living conditions and came back to get some tools and some helpers. "I can fix his place, if we just buy a few tools," Carl exclaimed. Quickly we purchased the necessary tools and supplies, and Carl went back. They fixed the roof so it no longer leaked; built kitchen cupboards; bought a heater, painted and plastered, and turned a hovel into a neat, clean apartment. Yehuda was overjoyed and dubbed Carl and the others "the golden angels of Jerusalem"!

In that moment, a program was born. Since that day, over 800 homes have been repaired at no cost to the recipients. The men who serve on this team—and over the years there have been many—always say they have the best job in Bridges for Peace.

Ethiopian Community Blessed

Recently, we have been helping families in the Ethiopian Jewish community. This immigrant community has many hurdles to overcome in their absorption into Israeli society. Many continue to need assistance even after several years in the country. They have had to make the adjustment from living a simple African subsistence lifestyle where electricity, indoor plumbing, and computers were not part of their reality to that of a modern, technological state.

All immigrants have to learn a new language and adjust to a new culture, but for immigrants from Ethiopia, virtually everything is different. The older ones find the adjustment particularly difficult. God is bringing them back to Israel, and it is our privilege to assist them in practical ways.

The Home Repair team views it as a privilege to work in the homes of these beautiful people. As they plaster and paint, they rejoice in the children's laughter which echoes throughout the dwelling. They are rewarded with large smiles on the people's faces as they hold their hands over their hearts to show their deep gratitude for the work that we do.

As one of our team members said, "It puts life back into perspective. These people don't have LCD TVs, they don't have iPhones, they don't even dream of owning a car. Their concerns are: 'There's water pouring into my apartment when it rains,' which causes the wall to turn black with mold or 'The kitchen cabinets are broken' when the hinges are all broken and water has swollen the cupboards so they are weak and full of mold or 'The toilet does not flush, so we use a bucket to flush.' When we ask how long it has been like this, they may say, 'Oh, six months or so.'"

Changing Lives with Love

When I hear these stories, I thank God for the Home Repair team members, for their willingness to leave the comforts of home and come to Israel and use their God-given skills to bless the Jewish people. Most of the people they assist have never had a positive encounter with a Christian before. One frail woman we helped years ago said, "I am 85 years old, and this is the first time a Christian has ever done a kindness to me." An elderly Jewish Russian immigrant who had served as a doctor for 45 years in the Russian army said, "This is the first time in my life anyone has ever done anything for me."

We are so thankful for the opportunities we have had to touch the elderly in these ways. Christians have changed their lives—and did it with love. This ministry is only possible through the gifts from our Christian supporters around the world. Your gift to the Home Repair project enables us to buy supplies needed to show God's care to the people of Israel in a very practical way.

With the generous support of our Christian supporters, we have been able to impact over 800 families through this project, building not just the walls of an apartment but bridges on which new relationships between Christians and Jews can be formed. Forever, Jewish attitudes towards Christians are changed. Where once they only knew the negative history and pain their people have experienced at the hands of Christians and "Christian" nations, today they have been significantly blessed by true Christian love in action.

When we started this project, it was called "Repairers of the Breach" after Isaiah 58:12: "Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In." Each of you who give to this project, and every person who volunteers as a craftsman on this team, is fulfilling this passage. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Blessings from Israel,

Rebecca J. Brimmer

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International President and CEO



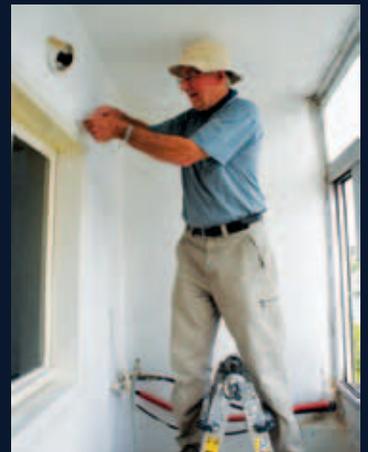
Marlene and Carl Bennett



Helping Ethiopian immigrants



Volunteers Hikaru Sakamoto (Japan) and Johan de Wolf (Holland) in new kitchen



Volunteer Barry Stone (Australia)