



Dear Friends,

April 2026

***“The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes.”
(Proverbs 12:1)***

For those of you who chipped in financially to replenish my Novo account, I want to express my deep gratitude for helping me start strong in 2026 ministry. I couldn’t do this without you. Thank you!

Presenting my perspective on pressing world events related to God’s global activity is an impossible task. It would necessitate multiple newsletters every month to *maybe* cover half the bases of the 83 countries where Novo staff serve. My apologies for the trickle of information you receive from me.

Gospel growth in some locations is slow-going. In other regions it is exploding! I oversee staff in stable places and those ministering in hard places, and it seems that the hard places are where the spiritual fruit unfolds most. Lots of hard places where I could draw attention, but I’ll focus on Iran and the Middle East since that captivates the attention of everyone right now.

Iran

Circa 2005, Novo staff have ministered in Iran via our team in Beirut, Lebanon and staff based in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. Novo lost count more than 10 years ago at 600+ Discovery Bible Study groups started in Iran, with no idea as to the multitude more initiated since then. Many missiologists believe that in this past decade more people per capita are deciding to follow Jesus in Iran than in any other nation of the world.

Novo’s Iranian ministry partners (NEO) are scattered in several cities, currently cutoff from contact and driven deeper underground due to oppression from the regime. Pray for their protection and for their circumstances to serve “...the greater progress of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12).

Nadim Costa, Novo/NEO Director in Beirut, Lebanon recently wrote:

“Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is a difficult moment for our people across the Middle East. This conflict has brought fear and uncertainty. Communities are experiencing the heavy physical and emotional weight of war. Iran remains under heavy raids. In Lebanon, there are over 700,000 refugees who have fled their homes. Families are praying for safety. Churches and mission organizations are doing their best to serve frightened communities with practical hope, care, and the message of Jesus. The sound of explosions shakes the ground we stand on. Humanitarian needs are growing. The displaced are seeking safe places and daily subsistence. Parents are doing their best to reassure children who are traumatized by the violence. In times like these, we need the Body of Christ to stand with us. Pray for the courage and strength of Jesus followers as they respond to the needs of neighbors, the resilience and stamina of ministry teams serving in the midst of fear and uncertainty, and for open hearts of many to turn toward Christ and discover the hope that only He can give. Throughout history, great spiritual receptivity often occurs in the midst of crisis. When human security collapses, people begin to ask deeper questions about life, faith, and hope. This is the time when the Church can shine with compassion, courage, and the love of Christ. Thank you for standing with us. Your partnership reminds those serving in the region that they are not alone, and even in the darkest moments the light of Christ cannot be extinguished. Your prayers matter!”

I've trekked from neighboring Turkmenistan with Novo staff into mountainous regions of Iran to minister among the Nohur, an unreached people group, where pocket villages are scattered throughout the maze of mountains.

The village patriarch invites us into his home where all are gathered to host the strangers to a meal. Seated on beautifully hand-woven carpets and no furniture, food is laid out on the floor for everyone to eat without utensils, using only the right hand from common plates and bowls. The conversation begins as women sit at one end of the room and men at the other. I listen as Mohamed shares the gospel with the gathered villagers. After three hours, Mohamed concludes, "When you lay down to sleep, ask Jesus to appear to you in the night. Jesus will confirm to you everything I've said here today."



Not exactly my method of evangelism, but it's the go-to in this region of the world. It's how Mohamed came to Jesus (another story), and it's the same story for so many more.

At a Novo training in Basra, Iraq, two uninvited women showed up at the by-invitation-only event. Novo staff approached the women at the first training break and asked, "Who are you and how did you hear about this?" The women said, "We're from Iran. We came to Christ at the University of Texas but were recalled to Iran when the Shaw fell in 1979, and God called us to be itinerant evangelists since 1979. Recently, we had the same dream. In the dream, we saw Basra, a street, and this house. God told us to come here on this date to receive what we are to do next." Those women returned to Iran with Novo Disciple Making Movement training. Just one of many stories regarding God's foundation laid in Iran.

I believe that we are living in unprecedented times. Jesus followers in Iran are many. My prayer is for God to channel the hearts of kings, to bring about events that would open the gates of Iran, and for the Christians of Iran to serve as a witness to the Muslim nations. Pray with me amid war and its horrors for the extension of God's hand to channel and chart the course of nations and peoples around the world.

For Turning Hearts & Hearts of Hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Cathey".

Mark Cathey
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