

## **Baptist Care SA Friendship Program**

### **Semira's Story**

Semira\* is a young Muslim woman from Eritrea, a country in the horn of Africa, next to Sudan and Ethiopia.

Eritrea is a one-man dictatorship which has one of the worst human rights records in the world. The government restricts religious freedoms, permits no independent media outlets or opposition parties and subjects its citizens to arbitrary imprisonment and indefinite conscription.

Semira escaped from Eritrea to Sudan with her parents and 7 siblings in 2011 when she was 19 because "soldiers take young people by force to a special area and train them to use guns, but many don't ever come back."

Semira and her family lived in a large refugee camp in Sudan for 5 years. During this time they were granted refugee status and eventually were accepted into Australia's Humanitarian Settlement Program.

In 2016, Semira and her family arrived to Adelaide. Initially Semira found it difficult because she didn't know how to speak English and had to learn a lot about life in Australia.

After a year of studying English at TAFE, Semira was matched with a volunteer through Baptist Care SA's Friendship Program.

Semira met regularly with her new 'Australian Friend' and together they enjoyed activities such as practising English, exploring Adelaide, sharing meals, and learning more about Australian culture and customs.

Semira is now studying to be a Dental Laboratory Assistant and is grateful for the peace and security of living in Australia.

\*Not her real name.

### **Baptist Care SA's "Breaking Free" Program**

#### **John's Story**

John\* grew up in Adelaide. At a very young age his father suicided, while his mother became a chronic alcoholic.

At the age of 12 he left home and moved interstate, spending most of his teenage years on the streets of Kings Cross. His mentors were drug dealers and gang members.

He lived in an environment of intimidation and violence which left him with mental scars that have never left him, developing a mindset never to trust anyone.

Since the age of 18, John has spent most of his adult life experiencing the drug-crime-prison cycle in both NSW and SA.

At 30 years of age, while he was in the Adelaide Remand Centre awaiting sentencing, one of the prison chaplains began to visit John and over time build a strong relationship with him.

John started to open up and share about his past and how he had lost hope of ever being able to live a normal life again. He had never received support beyond release from prison. He would simply go back to what was familiar, the same old networks and the same destructive environment.

While in prison, John gave his life to Christ. He is still in the prison system, but now shares his faith with other inmates. More recently he was instrumental in leading his cell mate to faith.

"It's what I love to do these days" he says.

The journey for John post prison will not be an easy one. No doubt, given his background there will be many hurdles, but given a mentor and a loving, praying community around him, there is no limit to what God can do in his life.

\*Not his real name.

## **Baptist Care SA's 'Hope Pack'**

### **The importance of hope and a friend**

“The pits”, “a really bad spot”, “deep depression” – these are the phrases people use to describe their lives before becoming involved in Share and using the Hope Pack with their buddy.

The Hope Pack gives the person something special to look forward to each day.

Kate\* says, “The pack was a lifeline to me, not only did it have healthy habits and things to do daily to get me looking forward, which was essential at the time, but it also had positive messages, Christian messages that spoke to me on a spiritual level, to lead me forward.”

Nico\* states, “I found the best part of it for me was definitely the scriptures. I know who I am in Christ now, I really know!”

George\* says, “I found the Hope Pack very helpful. It gave me structure and something to do on a daily basis, but probably the most important aspect of the whole package was the buddy. The buddy gave me someone with whom I could commune. There was a sense that someone was walking the path with me. Someone was there for me who would hold my hand and not let me slip back into the deep depression I was in.”

Don\* agrees, “My buddy has been very important to me because I felt alone and lost for so many years. It is great to have someone who genuinely cares about my spiritual walk. I'm not alone!”

Nico concludes saying, “One of the best things about it, I went from getting help to giving help!”

\*Not their real names.

### **Baptist Care SA's Homelessness Services**

#### **A home at last, after 30 years on the streets**

South Australian Baptists have a heart for people experiencing homelessness, and it is this heart that originally led them to establish the organisation now known as Baptist Care SA.

Just as the hands do the bidding of the heart, Baptist Care SA continues to care for and support homeless people, like Alan\*.

Alan has been homeless for most of his adult life and it's taken its toll on his health. However, for people who have been homeless for years, warmth and safety can become unfamiliar and uncomfortable.

Which is why Baptist Care SA's Exceptional Needs Unit (ENU) has been set up in such a considered and deliberate way so that Alan, and others like him, feel respected and can become comfortable with being in a home.

Alan has often come to our Inner City Homelessness Services for meals and support, and he's well known to our staff. Many of these people also work at the ENU home; creating an immediate sense of familiarity.

"We don't enforce our ideas of comfort on Alan," said a staff member. "We've just opened the door and let Alan lead the way."

At first Alan would not go inside the house. Later he was happy to visit, and eventually he stayed one night.

Alan has now become used to being warm and well fed. He's learning to cook and invites family to his home for tea and hosts movie nights for friends.

"I was down and out," says Alan. "(Now) it's fantastic - great balls of fire!"

We ask that you remember Alan, our Homelessness Services staff, and those who remain homeless in your prayers.

\*Not his real name.