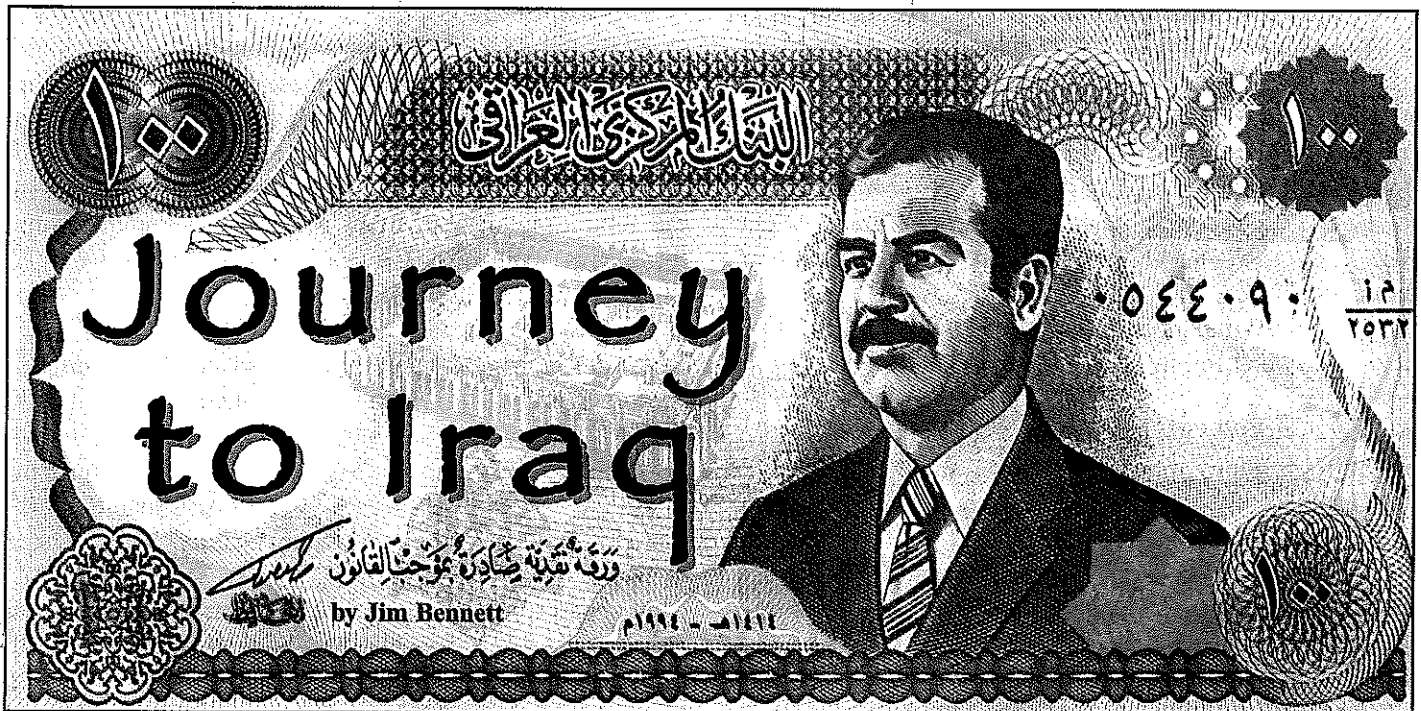


# INTERCEDE

VOL. XX, NO. 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004



In the mid-1990s I lived in Jordan and befriended many Iraqis, both Christian and Muslim, who had fled to Jordan as a result of the 1991 Gulf War. My Christian Iraqi friends encouraged me to visit their country and observe the Spirit of God at work. In 1998, after a grueling 12-hour, 700-mile bus trip across the desert, I arrived in Baghdad. In spite of government “minders,” I was able to meet and speak with many Christians. In addition to the historic faith communities of Chaldean and Assyrian Catholics, and Greek Orthodox, I was amazed to find a large evangelical family and a substantial group of Pentecostals.

As we were getting ready to leave, an engineer said, “I lead a house fellowship in Baghdad. As we studied the Scripture, amazing things happened. First, individuals were born again. Second, while we were studying the Book of Acts, we began to praise the Lord and suddenly, one by one, people began to speak a language they had never learned. Third, we saw that divine healing played a prominent role in the Book of Acts. Since we

had many ill people, I began laying hands on them, and miracles occurred right before our eyes. We are ready for someone to live here, help us organize our fellowships and teach us. Can you come?”

In disappointment I told him that neither of our governments would permit that, but I made a strong commitment to pray for laborers for Iraq. Needless to say, I have never forgotten this man’s haunting question: “Can you come?”

**Return to Baghdad.** On August 29, 2003, I flew with 12 other passengers in a Beechcraft plane operated by a humanitarian agency from Amman, Jordan to Baghdad, a city of five million. During our descent the plane bobbed and weaved to avoid possible rocket fire from the ground. “Welcome to Baghdad,” the American soldiers said, as they took my picture and placed my name on the visitors’ list. Once through the heavily guarded airport perimeter, a Jordanian pastor and I were on our own.

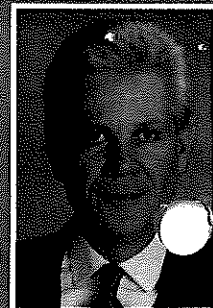
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# Until All Have Heard

*How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? Romans 10:14*

**Jim Bennett, Director**  
**Center for**  
**Ministry to Muslims**



**W**here did Abraham come from? Where did God send Jonah? Where was Daniel's lions' den? Ur of the Chaldees was in southern Iraq, 220 miles south-east of Baghdad; Nineveh, in northern Iraq opposite modern Mosul on the Tigris River; and Babylon, about 45 miles south of Baghdad on the Euphrates River. Modern Iraq includes most of what the Greeks called Mesopotamia—the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Dr. Stanley Horton's words remind us that some of the most important episodes of the Old Testament occurred in Mesopotamia—modern day Iraq.

A veteran missionary teacher once said to me, "Burdens are built on information." He believed the more we know about something, the more intelligently we can pray about it. I wasn't sure that I agreed with him! Over time, though, I have come to understand that he was right. He did not mean that information alone was enough; but he knew that facing stark facts would drive us to our knees. In this issue about Iraq, and with the accompanying booklet, you will possess enough information to occupy your prayer time for a long period. Allow the Holy Spirit to burden you to pray for Iraq.

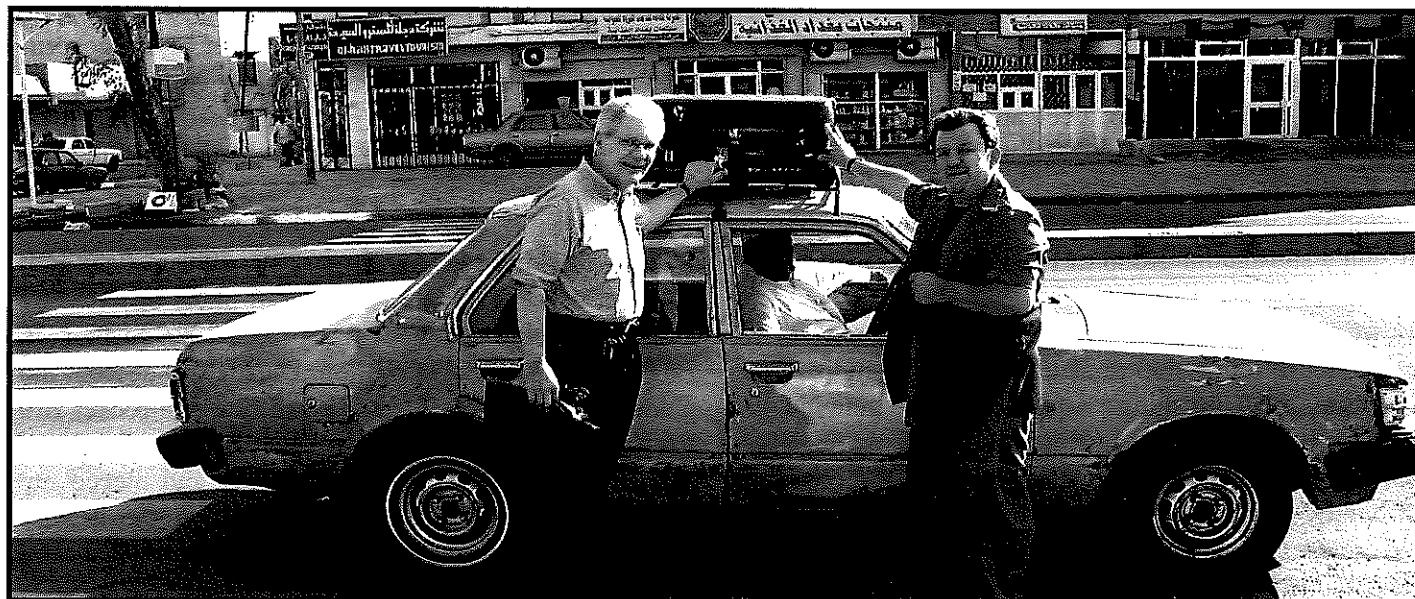
Please take time to read the lead article of this issue in which I have shared observations from my trip to Iraq in

September of 2003. Iraqis believe their agriculture, tourism, and oil industries have the potential to make them a strong country, and I pray all these industries will thrive. However, my main concern is that we plead with the Lord that His work would thrive. And remember that 97% of Iraqis are Muslims, and they must hear the good news. In the rebuilding of Iraq there are many potential wrong turns. It is imperative that God's people call on the Holy Spirit for wisdom and guidance.

With this *Intercede* you have received *Rebuilding A Nation Through Prayer*. In the introduction, Doug Clark says, "This brings us to the reason for this prayer booklet. It is, quite frankly, an unabashed cry for help from our missionary team in the nearby country of Jordan to all of you to join us in 30 days of prayer for Iraq."

This booklet provides structure for your prayer time. As Doug suggests, "Please take this booklet and blend its 30 brief prayer points into your daily quiet time. Read it as a family after a meal. Use this tool, and let God use you to affect the course of history and the fate of a nation."

*Rebuilding A Nation Through Prayer* is in the hands of thousands of praying people. *Intercede* readers, will you please join us for a 30 day prayer focus on Iraq?



**Baghdad Taxi Service**

# MUSLIM WORLD NEWS

## PAKISTAN

Authorities have arrested alleged Muslim militant Abdul Jabbar as the organizer of the March 12, 2002, attack on the Protestant International Church in Islamabad, the attack on Murree Christian School August 5, and the Taxila Christian Hospital August 9 attack. More than 70 Christians were wounded and 15 died in the attacks, Christianity Today's Web log reports. Jabbar is believed to head a faction of the illegal group Jaish-al-Mohammed. Members of the group allegedly attacked India's parliament in December 2001.—*Pulse*

## PHILIPPINES

Rampaging Islamic rebels in the southern islands are forcing the displacement of villagers, who fear being killed in the crossfire between the rebels and government forces. Even in peace, these villagers fear violence will break out again at any minute. Armed conflict has forced many families from their homes, placing them among at least 1.5 million in Southeast Asian countries who live as refugees. But because they remain in their home countries rather than across a border in another land, they are considered "internally displaced people" and don't qualify for protections from the UN High Commission for Refugees. Said one displaced Indonesian who was forced to flee his four-room house and 100-acre orchard with his wife and five children to a stall in an old warehouse, "I'm afraid of the Jihad fighters. They say that they

have gone home, but I know that they are still there."—*Pulse*

## SAUDI ARABIA

A week after deportation from Saudi Arabia, Eritrean Christian Girmaye Ambaye confirmed that he had been banned from returning to the Muslim kingdom for the next five years. Ambaye, had been jailed in Jeddah since March, when he was arrested for witnessing about his Christian faith to Muslims. He is the 13th member of an Ethiopian-Eritrean Christian congregation to be jailed and deported from Jeddah over the past two years. Ambaye estimated he had explained the Christian gospel to 600 cellmates during 20 weeks spent in a crowded group cell at the detention center. Forty-two of the prisoners indicated to him that they had decided to become Christians. Upon arriving in Asmara, Eritrean immigration authorities interrogated him and confiscated his identity card and passport before releasing him to go home. Ambaye said he did not know what he would do now that he has returned to Eritrea, which he left 15 years ago to find work as a tailor in Saudi Arabia. "I will rest first, and then I will see what the Lord will show me," he said.—*Compass*

## LATIN AMERICA

For two years Latin American countries have been requesting help in preparing workers for the Muslim world. CMM has been conducting seminars and teaching Islamic classes in their Bible schools. A memorable seminar took place in a Bible

school in the mountains of a country in South America. You might ask, "Are there Muslims in South America?" The answer is, "Yes." More importantly, these national churches are getting involved in missions, and they want to reach Muslims. The students had special interest in ministry to Muslims because they had been supporting one of their own graduates in a sensitive country in North Africa. We will call him Juan. The classes were intense as we taught eight hours daily. At week's end, they told us about Juan in North Africa. The students were supporting him by depositing funds into a bank account, allowing Juan to withdraw funds via an ATM. They told us he had not made a withdrawal in months nor had they heard from him. During the last hour of the seminar the students prayed for Juan. One student prayed, "O Lord, if Juan is alive please deliver him from that prison as you did Peter. If he has been martyred like James, may his blood be the seed of the gospel in the soil of North Africa." We challenged the students to be ready to commit their lives to missions if God called them. We asked them who would be ready to replace Juan. Most responded by gathering around the altar and dedicating their lives to Jesus. With tears running down their cheeks, they prayed, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord." God is truly raising up a mighty work force. Rarely have we seen such a high percentage of students so boldly declaring their desire to go as missionaries.—*CMM*

# Journey to Iraq

continued from page 1

With the exception of being awakened by mortar fire each morning around 2:00 a.m., and helicopters arriving to quell the trouble, I felt quite secure. It reminded me of many wartime visits to Beirut during the 70s and 80s, except for one big difference. In Beirut indiscriminate shelling produced devastation everywhere; nearly every building in Beirut seemed touched by war. In Baghdad precision bombs had wreaked havoc, but in a strangely ordered way. Outside the bombed areas, with only a few exceptions, most buildings were intact and virtually untouched by the bombing.

At most locations in Baghdad an American military convoy lumbered past every few hours, and a regular flow of helicopters monitored the city from above. Either out of respect for the law or fear, almost everyone observed the 10:30 p.m. curfew. Each evening, usually at inopportune moments, the electricity would be cut off. If you were lucky enough to be in a hotel or a restaurant, candles were lit immediately and shortly a generator kicked in. No one was surprised or upset; they had seen it all before and become accustomed to the routine.



Arriving with Jordanian pastor at Baghdad Airport.

**A Strong Church.** At our hotel we were met by the pastor of a wonderful Pentecostal congregation, whom I first met in Baghdad in 1998. In March, 2003, he was imprisoned for a month and in his words, "Tortured for no reason." I had the joy of preaching in his home to almost 200 people, teaching discipleship-training classes, and attending a powerful prayer meeting. His entire flock now consists of about 500 people, but his vision includes planting a church in every city in Iraq. A spacious two-story house has been located and renovated to accommodate the church meetings. In February of 2004, Bible school classes will begin on the second floor of the newly renovated building.

It was an honor for me to deliver a beautiful communion set to this congregation. Somehow I managed to get a 300-service set in one piece of luggage. That piece of luggage was divinely protected; for it was not opened until boarding the small plane in Amman for the flight to Baghdad! The airport employee with a Muslim name on his badge opened it and asked, "What is this?" I said, "It's a communion set for a church in Baghdad." With a slight nod, he said, "Hurry up and close it and go." At the Baghdad airport American soldiers delivered the suitcase to the waiting area...without a word of inquiry. Two days later, after a prayer meeting in the pastor's home, the suitcase was opened and the unwrapping process began. What a time of rejoicing as brothers and sisters in Christ realized they now had their own communion set. Some shed a tear or two. It was a very special moment.

**Shia Muslims.** Almost 97% of Iraq's 24 million people are Muslims. But 20 years of war, diplomatic isolation, and economic disasters have brought both a lowering of prejudice to the gospel as well as an openness to witnessing and to reading the Scriptures.

The Shia Muslims live mostly in Basra and the south, and comprise over half of Iraq's entire population. Shias are distinguished from Sunnis by their belief that the

successor to the prophet Muhammad should be a blood relative. The exceptional brutality of Saddam Hussein's suppression of the Shia revolt in 1991 brought death to many of their leaders, imprisonment to more than 10,000, and devastation to their land and communities.

The Shias have insisted on strong representation in a new government. (As an aside, I must say it was a little unnerving to be stopped at the edge of a street demonstration in Baghdad following the bombing death of the Shia's leading Imam, Ayatollah Hakim. American military vehicles calmly held traffic on the Tigris River bridge while the shouting, flag-waving marchers moved past the Republican Guard Palace and disappeared down the street.)

I met with several Shia converts from Islam, a few of whom attend the Pentecostal church in Baghdad. Since it was not considered safe for me to travel outside the capital, two Shia converts came from Babylon to meet us in Baghdad. Each of them had had a dream, and their dreams had led them to Amman, Jordan in search of the truth about Jesus. Both came to Christ in Jordan and then made their way back to Babylon. It was humbling to listen to their miraculous conversion stories that seemed right out of the Book of Acts!

**Sunni Muslims.** During Saddam's reign the relatively small Sunni Muslim minority and an elite within it repressed the Shia majority in the south and the Kurdish majority in the north. His tightly knit power base was composed of minority Syro-Mesopotamian Arabs who comprise just one quarter of the population. They are mostly Sunnis of the Hanafite system of Muslim law and are located primarily in the central part of the country between the mountains and lowlands.

**Kurds.** The Kurds live in mountainous regions stretching across Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. They are mostly Sunni Muslims of the Shafite system of Muslim law. They speak several dialects and belong to different political factions. A Kurdish church is now a reality. There are five congregations of Kurdish believers and a sprinkling of Christians in the Kurdish Autonomous Region. Other Muslim minorities include the Azerbaijanis and the Sunni Bedouins speaking the Nadji Arabic dialect.

**Christians in Iraq.** *Operation World* says about one third of all Christians left Iraq in the 1990s. Most agree that the present total Christian population tops 500,000. Many good leaders have had to flee. Some Iraqis are training in Jordan, Lebanon, and elsewhere. The largest Christian churches are the Assyrian and Chaldean Catholics, the Syrian Orthodox, and the Armenian Apostolic Church. Evangelicals number about 10,000, and are mainly confined to the cities. The number of Pentecostals and charismatics is difficult to determine, but several hundred would be a conservative estimate.

I spoke with priests from the historic churches and pastors from the evangelical community. All are guardedly optimistic; but without exception they believe the church in Iraq has survived for a purpose and is ready to flourish. They affirm Jesus' words, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

In 1998 I found a broken and demoralized society in Iraq. In August of 2003, I found that same Iraqi society filled with hope. Every person I met, whether Muslim or Christian, expressed thanks to America for liberating his or her country. While no one can predict the future of Iraq, one thing is for sure: the Spirit of God is there and He is moving!



Shia demonstration following assassination of Ayatollah Hakim.

# IRAQ



**Population:** 24 million  
**Religions:** Muslims 97%, Christians 1.5%, Other 1.1%, Non-religious 0.5%  
**Official Languages:** Arabic, Kurdish  
**Peoples:** Arabs 70.2%, Kurds 19%, Turkic 6.1%, Christian minorities 2.5%, Other 2.2%



Iraq is a land of stark contrasts, with the fertile plains of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, high mountains and desert. This historic region was the site of the ancient Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians. Iraq has an agonizing history caused by great religious and ethnic diversity. Following a violent revolution in 1958, Iraq became a repressive dictatorship. Except for the Assyrian and Armenian minorities, all peoples of Iraq are unreached. There is no direct witness to the Shia Arabs of the south; the Marsh Arabs, with their distinct culture; the Bedouin; Turkomen; Farsi, or Gypsies.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP...

## NORTHERN KURDS

The Northern Kurds are actually part of a much greater Kurd population. They are made up of a number of clans, tribes, and tribal confederations, many of which have been in existence for thousands of years.

The northern Kurds of Iraq make their living in much the same way as their relatives in Turkey and Iran, by farming and raising cattle. Their homeland is also one of Iraq's major oil producing regions.

They have endured much suffering in recent years. The Iraqi secret police have often poisoned many of their Kurdish opponents both at home and abroad. The Kurds need to know that true refuge and safety can only be found in Jesus Christ. Although there are 10 missions agencies working among them, there are still less than 1,000 known believers among them.

## PRAY THAT...

...God will supply clean water for the people of Iraq.

...God will send Christian medical teams to live among the Northern Kurds.

...the Holy Spirit will soften hearts and make them receptive to the gospel.

...the Lord will raise up linguists to translate the Bible into Kurmanji.

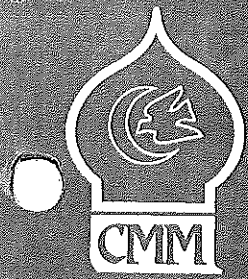
Information from Operation World, 2003 edition and Bethany World Prayer Center's "The Unreached People's Prayer Profiles."

**Location:** northeastern border of Iraq

**Population:** 1,544,000

**Religion:** Muslim (Shafite Sunnis) 90% (Shias) 4.9% (Other Muslims) 5%

**Language:** Kurmanji



# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims  
Around the World!



**Friday, January 2, 2004. Please pray**

...for workers who are training young men and women in video production so the gospel may be able to reach the Arab world through satellite and person to person distribution.

...for young believers in Tunisia to be filled with boldness, wisdom, and the vision to share the gospel with their friends and neighbors.

...that the power of God will free women drug addicts in Pakistan. Pray that the drug dealers will repent and preach Christ with the same ingenuity and boldness they now use for their evil purposes.

**Friday, January 9, 2004. Please pray**

...for a Christian from Indonesia and one from Bangladesh who are seeking asylum in the United States. Pray that God will give these men favor before the judge.

...for the CMM team member teaching an Islamic class next week at Northwest College in Washington. May many students be challenged to reach out in friendship to Muslims.

...for the partnership of religious organizations that is supplying Arabic Bibles and relief supplies to the churches in Baghdad so they can share the love of Christ and provide help to people in need.

**Friday, January 16, 2004. Please pray**

...that God will direct the first Institute of Islamic Studies being held in Amsterdam and that He will bring eager students to the classes. Pray for the CMM team members who will be teaching the Islamic courses for the next two weeks.

...for Saleem and Rasheed Masih who have been released from prison in Pakistan. Fearing for their lives, they have gone into hiding. Pray that they will soon get safe passage out of Pakistan.

...for Christians in the Palestinian Territory. They are suffering severe persecution. Harassment, torture, rape, imprisonment, and death of Christians is all too common.

**Friday, January 23, 2004. Please pray**

...for the North African Consultation meeting this week. Pray that God will guide these planning sessions.

...that God will supply teachers for a new school for refugees and others which is being started in Thailand.

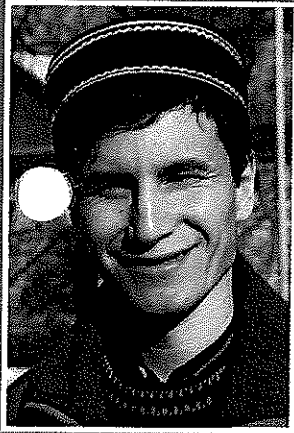
...for the printing a New Testament in French and Turkish to be distributed in the French-speaking areas of Belgium. Pray that this will help reach Turkish people with the gospel.

**Friday, January 30, 2004. Please pray**

...for the Islamic class being held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February. Pray for God's anointing on the CMM team member teaching the class and for receptive participants.

...for the Institute of Islamic Studies being conducted in a sensitive country, beginning next week. Pray that students will be encouraged to share the gospel with Muslims.

...for the All-India Conference which is being held next week. Pray that it will be a time of rich blessing as well as encouragement for the further preaching of the gospel.



Urge, then, first of  
that requests,  
prayers, intercession  
and thanksgiving be  
made for everyone.  
(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)



# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims  
Around the World!



Friday, February 6, 2004. Please pray

**...for the Turkish government, asking God to grant wisdom and discernment to the nation's leaders.** Pray that those with evil motives will be replaced.

**...for a young Kurd from Northern Iraq** who has attended a Christian outreach center in Germany. Pray that his heart will be open to the gospel as he rejoices in the liberation of his people.

**...for the children of southern Sudan.** Many of them have lost everything and forage for food. A Christian school is offering hundreds a safe haven, love, and healing from the ravages of war. Pray for His continued provision.



Friday, February 13, 2004. Please pray

**...that the Lord will replace harsh Islamic rule in Iran** with a government responsive to the needs of the people and willing to protect the rights of minorities. Pray for freedom to plant churches among the Azeri Turkomen and Qashqa'i Turks of this land.

**...that the attitude of Azeri officials toward Christians will change from hostility to respectful acceptance.** President Aliyev has declared his commitment to religious freedom in Azerbaijan, but local authorities need to be reined in and their restrictions lifted.

**...that the quality of education in the Gaza Strip will improve** and that an adequate school system with Christian teachers will be implemented.



Friday, February 20, 2004. Please pray

**...for the protection of Jordanian Christians distributing food in Iraq.** Pray for good health for all those involved.

**...for the congregations of the five churches in the Tana River District of Kenya that were burned last June.** This appeared to be in response to the preaching of a radical sheikh who declared a jihad against Christians.

**...that the growing number of Muslims in Ireland will not be able to gain extra advantage for their faith alone as is happening in the United Kingdom.** Many refugees are coming from Europe and Africa.

Friday, February 27, 2004. Please pray

**...for the family of Hridoy Roy, a Bangladeshi evangelist stabbed to death last April.** May the Lord provide comfort as well as food. The father was the only wage earner.

**...that the remaining mines in Afghanistan will be safely detonated and the Afghan children protected.**

**...for a carpentry project in an Arab country to provide employment for about 20 young Christian men** in an area where very few have ever worked.

**...for "Rachel", a Somali Christian with six children whose husband was murdered because of his faith.** Pray that the small business she has begun with outside help will flourish so she can support her family.

*I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. (1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)*