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Approach to Muslims

by Harry Morin

When it comes to Christians reaching out to Muslim people, one of the most common questions is, "How can I best share Christ with a Muslim?" The answer is not so simple because not all Muslims are the same. Islam embraces a global community of adherents who come from a wide assortment of national cultures, Islamic sects, religious practices and social strata. Some Muslims are extremely conservative and therefore suspicious of western ways. Conversely, some Muslims pride themselves as modernists and are quick to identify with contemporary trends. Some Muslims are totally secular and frown upon what they view as ignorance and religious fanaticism within their ranks. Many are involved in some measure of witchcraft practices because of their obsession with the spirit world.

How does a Christian relate the gospel to these people? It is obvious that one approach will not fit all. The same was true of Jesus' ministry. His approach for revealing the power of the gospel to the Samaritan woman was far different than it was for the religious Jew, Nicodemus, or for the blind man, Bartimaeus. It is apparent that Jesus saw people as unique individuals with basic human needs that required different approaches. For some, the need was healing. For others, it was a stirring word of conviction. For still others, it was a restoration of dignity and human value. No matter what the need, Jesus ministered with a heart of mercy and compassion.

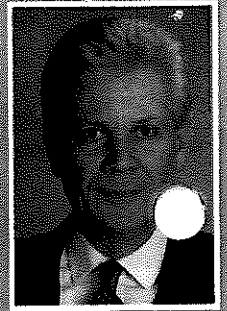
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Until All Have Heard

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



“My approach in reaching Muslims is the only right one,” some would argue. But I have often countered, “There are 1.2 billion Muslims in the world. Please think inclusively. If your approach is working, then rejoice. But remember that your approach may not work in another place. In most cases, years must be invested in order to see results among an unreached Muslim people group. Accept the fact that another brother’s approach may be as valid as yours.”

Meeting felt needs, power encounter, theological dialogue, contextualization, narrative storytelling and friendship building are but some of the successful approaches being used in reaching Muslims. Praise the Lord for each

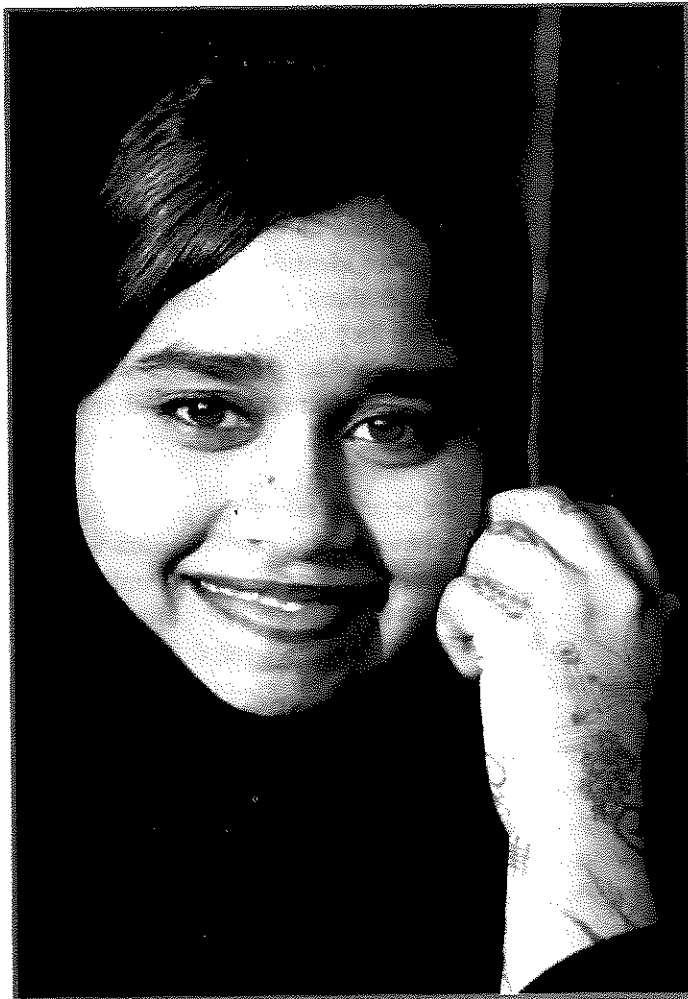
approach! To use a good basketball analogy: Let’s employ a “full court press.” Leave no stone unturned and no approach unused; just be sure your approach is biblical and brings glory to our Lord.

Writing in *The Last Great Frontier*, Phil Parshall says, “Denying God’s matchless diversity in drawing Muslims to Jesus damages the cause of Christ in far greater ways than merely wounding our brothers with accusations discrediting their missiological methods or theological scruples. Denial can damage trust between brothers called to reach the same people. Those who don’t trust each other don’t generally pray together.”

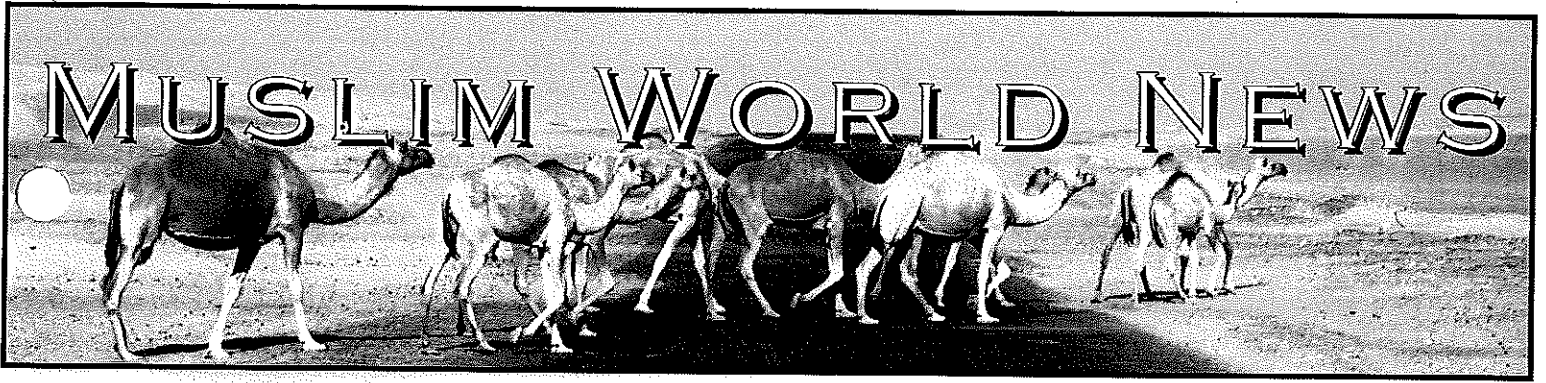
The Christian approach to the Muslim is a constantly recurring theme. It *should* recur again and again among those charged with the task of effectively conveying the good news of God’s reconciling love. It should recur not only because of the magnitude of the Church’s task in communicating the gospel to Muslims; but also because the eternal gospel itself is set in a changing world, and both the bearers and receivers of the gospel are participants in change. It recurs because, given the natural and cultural diversity of both Christians and Muslims, there is no single approach that can be judged to be the final one. It recurs because the Holy Spirit endlessly continues His ever-surprising work among His people.

Writing in *Muslims and Christians on the Emmaus Road*, Sobhi Malek says, “Now to our subject: Practical Means of Evangelizing Muslims. For this I have neither an exotic recipe nor a step-by-step formula. However, I do wish to emphasize one essential of any valid strategy: meet Muslims at their level. If our goal is to minister to Muslims, we have to meet them exactly where they stand. So important is this factor that it will decide whether or not they understand and accept the message we offer.”

Harry Morin has challenged us in his lead article to think seriously concerning our approach to Muslims. His response to the question, “How do you share Christ with a Muslim?” is so right when he says, “You share your life with him!” Whatever approach we use, it will require us to share our lives. Are we willing to do that?



MUSLIM WORLD NEWS



IRAQ

Doctors, nurses and patients are the losers in the squabble for control of Baghdad's 34 hospitals. Iraq's newly reopened Ministry of Health is canceling the elections of hospital administrators that had been organized by doctors and clerical militia members following Baghdad's fall. Instead, previous administrators who held power under Hussein are returning. However, Shia militia squads have wrested control of at least five city hospitals. Doctors and nurses are failing to show up for work because they fear for their safety or they haven't received any pay.—*Pulse*

SAUDI ARABIA

After nearly three months in a Saudi Arabian jail, Eritrean Christian Girmaye Ambaye is still awaiting deportation for alleged participation in "Christian activities". Ambaye, a member of the Ethiopian-Eritrean Christian congregation in Jeddah, has remained under arrest at the Bremen deportation center since March 25. According to the Eritrean Consulate, the fact that government computers show a car registered under Ambaye's name is holding up his deportation. Ambaye, 42, has lived and worked in Saudi Arabia since 1987. "But I became a believer in Jesus Christ five years ago, and this changed my life completely," he told *Compass*. Nine Ethiopians and two Eritreans from the same congregation were among 14 foreign Christians deported in the spring of 2002, after enduring six months or more of detention. Saudi authorities

regularly arrest and deport expatriate Christians whom they accuse of conducting Christian worship or trying to evangelize Muslims.—*Compass*

RUSSIA

Muslims number 11 million to 25 million or seven to 17 percent of the population, including those who are culturally Muslim but do not practice the religion. When published, last year's census data will likely reveal that Russia has a higher ratio of Muslims than any western European country. Since the fall of the former Soviet Union, more than 1,000 new mosques and dozens of religious schools have opened.—*Pulse*

INDONESIA

Violence has continued against Christians in Indonesia in recent weeks, with attacks on churches and the murder of a pastor. The situation in the Bekasi region has been tense since Muslim militants threatened to destroy unregistered churches. On June 9, a mob surrounded the Indonesian Christian Church in Pondok Ungu Permai during Sunday worship and, with cries of Allahu Akbar (God is great), set fire to the building, burning it to the ground. In a separate attack, a mob used a bulldozer to destroy a Pentecostal church in North Bekasi. Finally, a pastor was murdered in North Sumatra after leading Sunday services. Rev. Wau left his home that afternoon with an unidentified man. Two hours later when he had not returned, his wife became worried. His body was later found with deep wounds around the

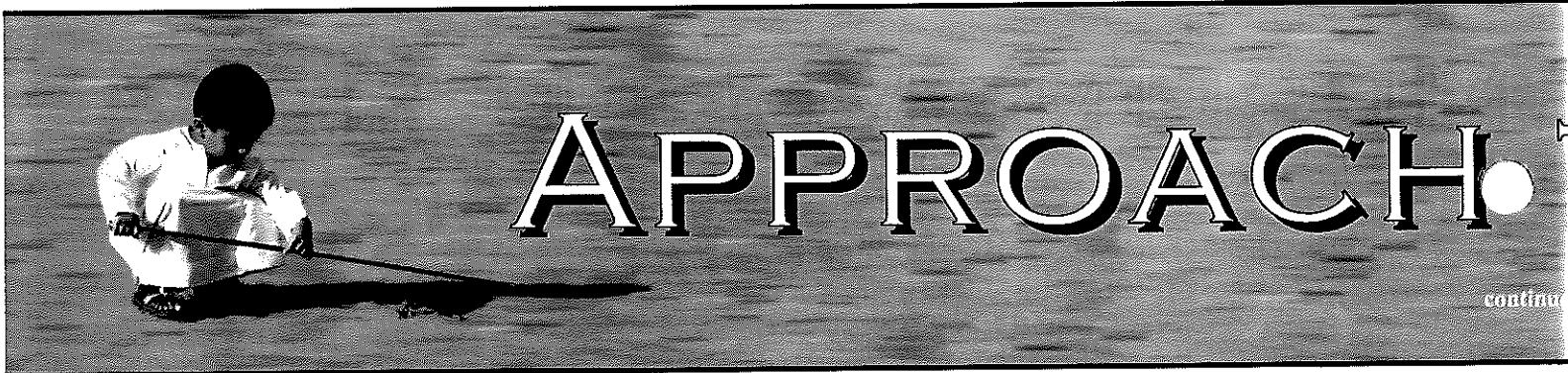
neck, indicating possible strangulation.—*Compass*

ITALY

Islam has become the country's second largest religion in the last decade due to immigration from North African countries. Now Italian Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisano is launching negotiations with Muslim leaders to sanction religious holidays, schools, weddings and the right to receive state funding. Pisano hopes to convene an "Islamic Italian Council" of Muslim leaders, echoing recent attempts in France to reduce the influence of funding and political propaganda from foreign countries.—*Pulse*

PAKISTAN

Five years after she was kidnapped, sold and forcibly married to a Muslim, a young Pakistani Christian woman has won legal divorce from the man. In a landmark decision on February 28, the Lahore Family Court granted Maria Samar John formal dissolution of her 1998 marriage to Abdul Ghaffar. Now 23, Maria was only 17 when she was tricked by a Muslim relative into leaving her home in Lahore. She was locked in a room by herself for five months, until the day armed men arrived with a stranger she realized was to be her bridegroom. The man, Ghaffar, paid her kidnapper the equivalent of \$2,000, and a wedding ceremony was performed. In September 1999, Maria found a house key and escaped with the couple's baby son.—*Compass*



APPROACH

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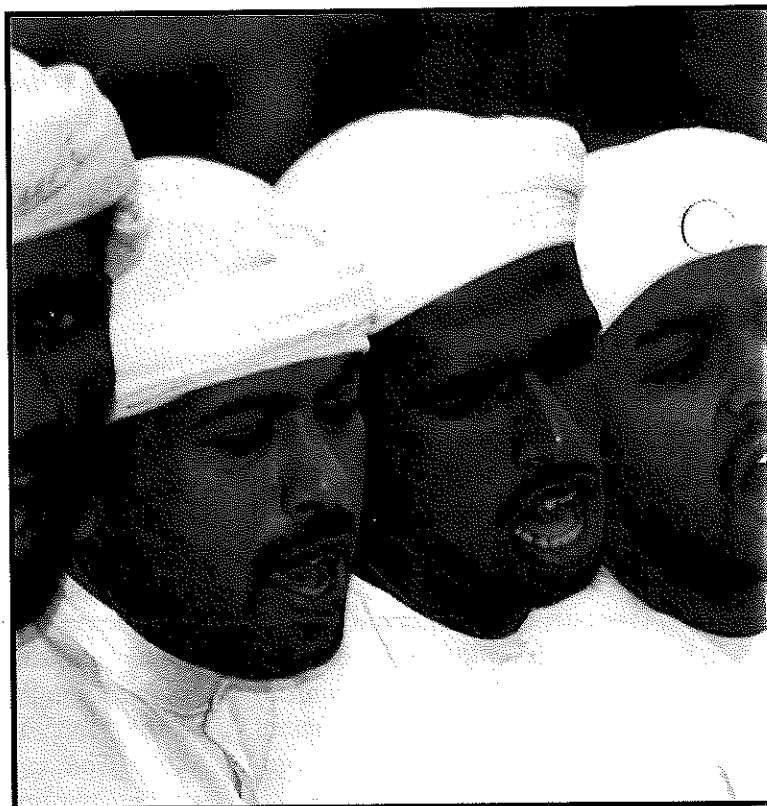
Today, basic human needs are no different, and hold true for Muslim people as well. For example, many Muslims secretly yearn for an assurance of salvation because it is lacking in their own faith. They believe their final destiny cannot be known until it is revealed on the Day of Judgment. Other Muslims search in desperation for some source of power that can deliver them from physical disease or demonic oppression. Throughout the Islamic world, countless Muslims flock to shrines in hope that a Muslim saint will intercede on their behalf and provide the miracle they need. Most Muslims live in third world poverty, and growing numbers struggle as refugees under the anguish of war, famine and natural disasters. They continue to hope for some measure of restored dignity and human value. Of course, the most basic need that is common to all is the need to be loved with a perfect and unconditional love.

As Christians who subscribe to the transforming power of the gospel, we know that we can lead these people to the one true source of deliverance and restoration. However, often in our desire to express sincere concern for their eternal welfare, we overlook their immediate need and begin to talk about the bliss of eternal life in the future. But for the Muslim mother whose baby is dying of malaria, or for the father whose only son is demon-possessed, a sermon about eternal life doesn't relate! That's not the need of the moment. Not only do we speak about eternal life, but we preach condemnation to complete the message. We may get as far as presenting a well-prepared explanation of the cross or of the trinity. But in most cases, a theological discourse does not reap the desired result. Perhaps this is where we have made one of our biggest mistakes in the past in relating to Muslim people. Through persuasive arguments, we have tried to reach Muslims via rationale—we have tried to reach them with our heads—when we should have been trying to reach them with our hearts!

In a recent survey, Muslims who have embraced Christ as personal Lord and Savior were asked to list the most significant factors that influenced their decision. Notable in this list were dreams, visions, healings and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. The one factor, however, that

headed the list was the teaching of the love of God and the demonstration of that love through a Christian friend who really cared. This tells us something very important. Muslims are impacted not so much by what they hear from our lips, but by what they feel from our hearts, for truly the heart is the channel of God's love.

With this in mind, the apostle Paul reminded the believers of Thessalonica, *We loved you so much that we were*



delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Notice, there is something more to share than simply the gospel. It is the sharing of one's life with another. That speaks of relationship and relevance. Is this not a beautiful picture of God himself? Yes, God shared His word with us through the voice of the prophets. But He loved us so much that even beyond that, He shared His life with us in the person of Immanuel, "God with us!"

TO MUSLIMS

page 1



How do you share the love of Christ with a Muslim? You share your life with him! You get to know him as a friend so that he eventually gets to know you too, and more importantly, the Christ within you! You get close enough to him so that he can feel the power of the gospel and the love of the gospel. You get close enough to him so that in times of crisis, he will trust you enough to ask you to pray for him. That is the time when God may choose to open the door wide, providing a wonderful opportunity! An



DO'S/DON'TS

SHARING WITH MUSLIMS

1. Take the time and be patient enough to listen to what Muslims want to say about their religion, their history and their concerns.
 2. Get to know a Muslim as a friend.
 3. Share your testimony of how God transformed your life through the power of the gospel.
 4. Begin your discussion of the things of God with issues you have in common, not issues that divide, so that communication remains open.
 5. Allow him the time to see Christ revealed in your deeds and daily struggles.
 6. Pray unceasingly for the intervention of God's illuminating Spirit, and continue to believe for a supernatural breakthrough.
1. Don't insult the Qur'an, Muhammad or Islam; simply uplift Christ.
 2. Don't debate or argue. Remember, you are a servant. (2 Timothy 2:24)
 3. Don't try to prove the Christian religion superior to the Islamic religion. Our message is not about religion; it is about a relationship with God through Christ.
 4. Don't interact with mixed company; let it be men to men, and women to women, unless the Holy Spirit clearly directs otherwise.
 5. Don't force the issue of salvation; pray instead for a genuine work of the Holy Spirit.
 6. Don't make salvation difficult; uphold the simplicity of the gospel. (Acts 15:19)

answered prayer for a miracle in the name of Jesus will serve to accredit whatever you want to say in regard to Jesus as the Savior of the world. Your love for him will eventually stir him to respond over and over again, "Please come back; I want to know more." But that will not happen until we can emulate the passion of Paul and say to our Muslim friend, "I love you so much that I not only want to share the gospel with you, but my life as well, because you have become so dear to me."



UZBEKISTAN

Population: 25 million

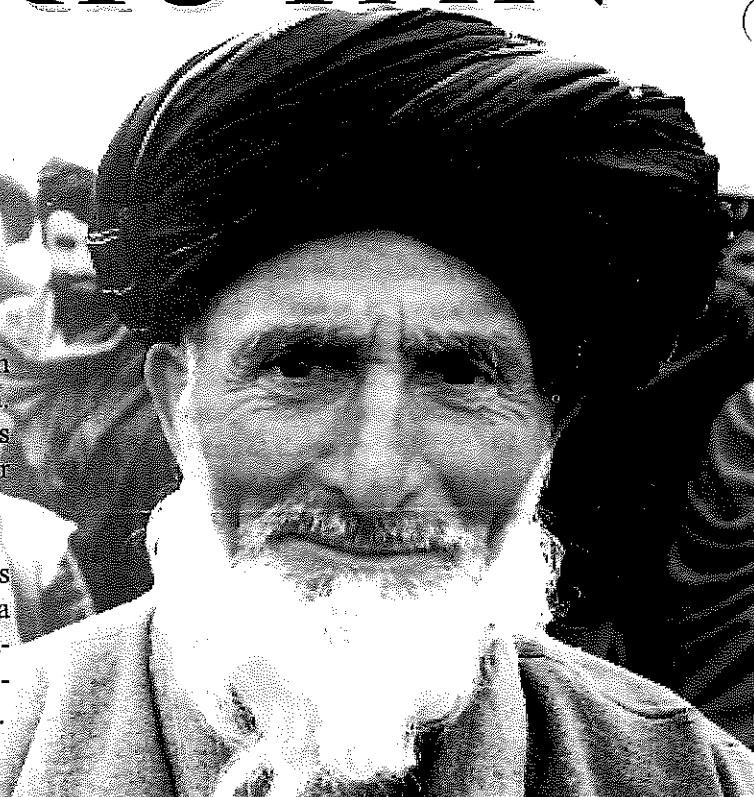
Religions: Muslim 74%, Non-religious 12%,
Atheist 9.2%

Official Languages: Uzbek

Peoples: Northern Uzbek 71.3%, Russian 8.3%,
Tajik 4.7%, Tatar 2.3%

Uzbekistan is located in Central Asia, extending from China's western border to nearly the Caspian Sea. Fertile valleys cover the eastern section, while deserts cover the western area. Oil, gold and cotton are major natural resources and sources of foreign income.

Uzbekistan was a republic of the USSR for 70 years until independence in 1991. Uzbekistan is officially a secular state with religious freedom, but Islamic fundamentalists have increasing influence. Only a small fraction of the Muslim majority has ever heard the gospel.



UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP...

KARAKALPAK

Location: Northwestern Uzbekistan

Population: 540,000

Religion: Muslim (Hanafites) 78%, Non-religious 19%

Language: Karakalpak

The Karakalpaks (*Kara* meaning black and *Kalpak* meaning hat) are believed to be descendants of a mixture of Iranians and Mongolians. They are Sunni Muslims of the Hanafite branch. The Karakalpak Republic is one of the major centers for the Sufi sect of Islam. Some Sufi Muslims are known for practicing self-hypnosis, which is induced by frenzied dancing and chanting.

Because of the Aral Sea pollution, an estimated 66 percent of all Karakalpaks suffer from hepatitis, typhoid or throat cancer. One out of ten babies dies before its first birthday, and 83 percent of the children have some long-term medical condition.



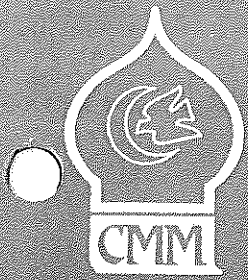
PRAY THAT...

... the Lord will send Christian medical teams to work among the Karakalpaks.

... the Lord will call people who are willing to go to Uzbekistan and share the love and hope of Jesus Christ with the Karakalpaks.

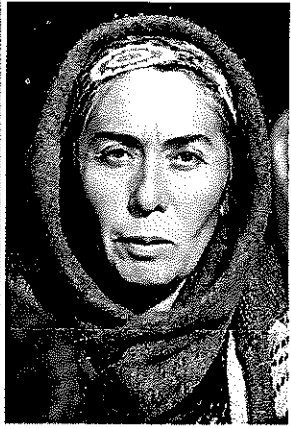
... the Lord will raise up a strong local church among the Karakalpaks by the year 2004.

Information from *Operation World*, 2001 edition and Bethany World Prayer Center's "The Unreached Peoples Prayer Profiles."



Jumaa Prayer Fellowship

Praying for Muslims
Around the World!



Friday, November 7, 2003. Please pray

...for a CMM team member as he travels to Denmark this weekend for teaching seminars on Islamics at three sites in that country next week. Pray that many participants will gain a new vision and motivation for ministry among Muslims.

...for Siham Qandah, a Christian widow in Jordan, who has had an ongoing custody case over her two children. Pray for restoration of her rights and home.

...that millions of Christians will join in beseeching God on behalf of their persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, many of whom are imprisoned and live under oppressive Muslim leaders and regimes. Sunday, November 9, is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Friday, November 14, 2003. Please pray

...that the youth of Somalia who are caught up in violence and drug wars will receive the salvation of Jesus Christ, leave the streets and put away their guns. Somalia is in desperate need of the gospel.

...for the Lord's will to be done with the new education law that the Indonesian Parliament passed in June that requires schools with 10 or more students of a particular faith to be taught religious studies by a teacher of that same faith.

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

Friday, November 21, 2003. Please pray

...for the students who will participate in a bloc Approaches to Islam course being taught next week by a CMM team member at a Bible college in Austria. Pray that the students will apply themselves and gain much to help them reach out to Muslims. Pray that the students will be filled with a deep desire and burden for Muslims.

...for gospel radio programs to reach into the hearts and lives of Muslims living in the Middle East and North Africa where freedom of religion is nonexistent. Yemenis are particularly in need of the gospel.

...for the son of a deceased Qur'anic teacher as he studies the Bible with a worker in a West African country. Pray that God will open his understanding.

Friday, November 28, 2003. Please pray

...for the CMM team member who is teaching a bloc course at a Bible school in Bangladesh next week. Pray for safety in travel and for responsive students. Pray that God will enable the students to use all that they learn.

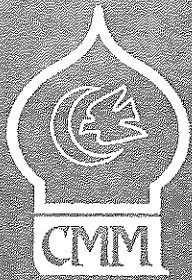
...for the children of Christian families in the CIS who are being interrogated by secret police. Pray for them as they face ridicule and worse at school.

...for the Muslim military chaplains. Nine of the 13 presently serving purportedly identify themselves with the strict Wahhabi group that controls Saudi Arabia. Pray for understanding concerning their loyalty and training.

...for wisdom and justice in the Canadian and United States legal procedures connected with immigration and refugee claimants.



Charge, then, first of all 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, December 5, 2003. Please pray

...for the Kalagan people of Mindanao. The young widow of the evangelist shot in January 2002 has stated publicly that she has forgiven the murderer and prays for him to find peace with God. More intercessors are needed because others trying to reach the Kalagan people have also been targeted.

...for a Middle Eastern refugee who found the Lord in China and other family members as they seek permanent asylum.

...for those who are preparing and presenting Islamic seminars in South Africa. Praise God for the increased interest in outreach to Muslims, particularly among church women.

...that Qatar's leader, Amir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani will be influenced by the gospel and allow more freedom of religion in Qatar.



Friday, December 12, 2003. Please pray

...that God will reveal himself supernaturally to students at an Islamic University in Niger, that they may know the truth about Jesus Christ.

...that God will intervene in the needs of the war-torn country of Sudan where famine and fighting have prevailed for 18 years. Pray especially for the Christians to feel the Lord's support and encouragement.

...against the increased threat of terrorism that prevails in East African countries, particularly Kenya. Pray that would-be-terrorists will be confronted with the gospel. Several churches and offices of the charity Save the Children in Malawi were attacked by a Muslim mob in June, the first religious violence in that country in modern times.



Friday, December 19, 2003. Please pray

...for the protection, both physically and spiritually, of a gifted evangelist who is being greatly used of God in North Africa.

...for an Albanian family that is studying lessons on the Life of Christ. Pray for the Holy Spirit's work within their lives providing salvation and relief from a financial burden.

...for radio programs that are being beamed into many countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Pray for one young Moroccan who is showing great interest in the gospel.

...that the 16 percent of Pakistanis who have viewed the Jesus film will be responsive to the message they have heard.

Friday, December 26, 2003. Please pray

...for the economic development of the country of Chad. Oil has recently begun to flow and a loan has been given for the development of agriculture. Pray that the poor farmers and herdsmen will receive some benefit. Fundamentalists are trying to influence the political situation in their favor.

...that God will intervene in the situation in Italy where Islam has become the country's second largest religion in the last decade. Proposed laws aimed at extremists may actually harm evangelical churches, which are often seen as sects.

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