

# INTERCEDE

VOL. XV, NO. 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1999

## WOMEN IN ISLAM

by  
*Vivienne Stacy*

When we meet a Muslim woman we should regard her first as a human being, second as a woman, and third as a Muslim. Whoever she is, her perception of herself may be vastly different from this. Many Muslim women accept, without question, the state in which they were born. They do not think of life as offering any alternatives.

The following three profiles illustrate the way that the world looks at a world renowned Muslim woman and how it views her illiterate, unknown village neighbors.

### NO ONE KNOWS HER NAME

Let a Muslim woman speak through her own poetry.

#### THE JOURNEY

The journey of my life  
begins from home,  
ends at the graveyard.  
My life is spent  
like a corpse,  
carried on the shoulders  
of my father and brother,  
husband and son.  
Bathed in religion,  
attired in customs,  
and buried in a grave  
of ignorance.

**Atiya Dawood**  
*Sindhi poet, Pakistan*

When I pray for a Muslim woman in her presence, I nearly always mention her name. For me, it is the symbol of her personhood. Maybe no one else uses it in daily life. She is

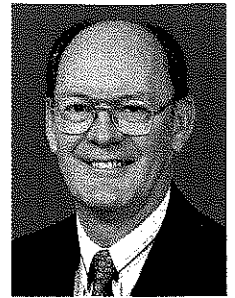
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# Speaking on Behalf of Muslims

*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)*

Ron Peck, Director  
Center for Ministry to Muslims



This issue of *Intercede* is dedicated to the women of Islam. Consider with me for a few minutes the scope of what we are considering.

At least half of all the Muslims in the world are women. Fifty percent of 1.2 billion Muslims simply means that there are 600 million Muslim women who need a clear witness of the gospel of Christ.

There are several unique factors that make this a staggering challenge.

First, Islamic culture dictates that Muslim women lead rather sheltered lives. In many cases they have little or no contact with any men outside of their own family circle. And they certainly have no contact with Christian ministers or missionaries unless they are women.

Another challenge in reaching out to women of Islam is the fact that they generally have fewer opportunities for education than do Muslim men. This means that the literacy rate among Muslim women is much lower. Therefore, the printed page is not a viable means of communication with Muslim women in general.

Most Muslim women marry at a fairly young age and spend many years in raising large families. This, of course, is a noble and appropriate activity; but it is also a significant factor to consider if one wishes to communicate the gospel to them.

*Islamic culture dictates that Muslim women lead rather sheltered lives.*

I have personally lived among Muslims for many years and my wife and I have had the privilege of cultivating some very positive relationships with them. Several Muslims have become family friends. It seemed easier to make friends in the Muslim com-

munity where we lived after we had children. Our children helped open many doors for friendship.

One of our first language teachers was an elderly, dignified Bengali gentleman who was old enough to be our grandfather. He and his wife did, in fact, treat us as if we were a part of their family. When our first daughter was born, they were very happy for us and they purchased gifts for our baby far beyond their financial ability.


*How will Muslim women like our teacher's wife ever come to know Jesus as Savior?*

My memory of our language teacher's wife is very vivid. She was very religious. She was faithful in her prayers and in keeping the month of fasting. She seemed to be at peace with herself and with the life she lived.

I have to admit that I was surprised to see the expression of inner tranquility in this lady's life. I certainly respected her, but I also knew in my heart that she needed a Savior more than anything else in the world.

Yet how can Muslim women—devout, religious women like our teacher's wife—ever come to know Jesus as Savior?

It will only happen through a deep and loving relationship of a Christian lady friend who can share the life of Christ on a personal level.

What should we be praying for? That God will call women to minister to Muslim women in the love of Jesus Christ. And that women who are called will commit themselves to long-term relationships with Muslim women. A Christian woman must be willing to wait patiently until the Holy Spirit opens her Muslim friend's heart to the truth. 



### Iran

A news update concerning the families of the martyrs Haik Hovsepian-Mehr, Mehdi Dibaj, Hossein Soodmand, and Mohammed Bagher Yusefi has been received. Mrs. Hovsepian expressed her thanks to the thousands of brothers and sisters in the Lord all over the world who have continued to send postcards and letters of encouragement to her. These have given her and the children much joy and a sense of not being forgotten.

Her eldest son Joseph has finished producing his first Farsi movie, "Crossing the Border of the Night." Its world premiere was held at London's Commonwealth Institute. Joseph hopes to continue using his training to produce Farsi-language movies and videos.

On behalf of the Mehdi Dibaj children, Takoosh expressed her gratitude and joy that all of them have become strong believers.

Sister Aktar Yusefi has just moved to another area of Tehran. The hundreds of letters and postcards she has received have encouraged her. She was greatly disappointed, however, when Iranian customs officials refused to allow her to attend a Christian conference in Armenia. She hopes she will again have freedom to travel.

Recent news about Mahtab Soodmand, the blind widow of the late pastor Hossein Soodmand from Mashhad, is more positive. Even though authorities forced the Assemblies of God church in that city to close its doors, Mrs.

Soodmand remained there. For years she suffered from severe depression, but is doing much better now. She recently travelled to Tehran to participate in joyous wedding ceremonies.

come from the south and have been taken captive by Islamic groups from the north. In a documentary shown on Dutch television, CSI representative Baroness Caroline Cox was seen to pay 60 Pounds Sterling (approximately 100 US dollars) per slave. In all, 500 slaves were released in this way.

—IDB

### Pakistan

Pakistan's Christian community spoke out forcefully in early

September against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's new 15th Amendment Bill, which is designed to replace the nation's civil legal system with Islamic law. Both Catholic and Protestant church leaders declared the proposed constitutional amendment would curb religious freedoms and subject many non-Muslims to further persecution.

Sharif's proposal would scrap the country's civil laws and install the Koran and Sunnah, the holy books of Islam, as "constitutionally and legally supreme." Sharif insisted the amendment would "protect the rights" of the non-Muslim minorities, some five percent of the national population.

Under the bill, the federal government would be required to enforce Islamic prayers five times a day, collect religious tithes and take responsibility "to prescribe what is right and to forbid what is wrong." Muslim critics claimed the bill would enable the federal government to move towards a personal dictatorship.

Members of the minority Christian and Ahmadi communities have been targeted heavily in recent years by a heavy-handed blasphemy law, which requires the death penalty for anyone insulting the prophet Mohammed.

—Compass

### Sudan

The Swiss-based organization Christian Solidarity International is buying slaves from Arab militias in Sudan to set them free. The slaves

### Turkey

A Turkish court handed down stiff sentences in early September to eight members of an outlawed Islamist group convicted of bombing a Christian bookstall in southeastern Turkey last year. A four-year-old boy was killed in the grenade attack, which injured 25 bystanders at Gaziantep's crowded trade fair on September 14, 1997. The bombing had followed several verbal threats against Good News Publishing Company's bookstall, which was legally selling Turkish-language Bibles and a variety of Christian books and tapes at the annual fair.

The convicted bomber, Mehmet Kurt, was given life in prison. Three defendants were given 12-year terms and the others were jailed for three years and nine months.

The Islamist group had weapons and explosives for other planned attacks. Both the Turkish president and prime minister publicly condemned the bombing.

—Compass

### Africa

In September 1998, a CMM team held training seminars in Malawi. More than 125 students from the Bible school in Lilongwe and 12 pastors attended the sessions. Everyone attending had a deep burden to reach their Muslim neighbors with the gospel.

Pastors Seminars in Mzuzu and Mangochi had 150 attendees. The Assemblies of God general superintendent of Malawi related that their Fellowship's goal is to double their number of churches before 2000. They hope that many can be planted in Muslim areas.



# WOMEN IN ISLAM

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either the daughter of Habib, the sister of Yakub, the wife of Latif, or the mother of Ibrahim. Actually, her name is Miriam.

Like 75 percent of the women of her country, she is illiterate. However oppressed she might be by her men-folk, she stands little chance of justice. If she has rights, who will tell what they are and how she can obtain them?

Miriam's life is dominated by fear and superstition. She is afraid of evil spirits and of death.

Probably she will visit the family shrine to get help from the *pir* or 'holy man'. He may give her a charm. In return she will give the 'holy man' an offering of a chicken, which she can ill-afford.

She manages to look after the extended family and also helps in the fields in the mornings. She is rarely appreciated—mostly taken for granted, and often abused.

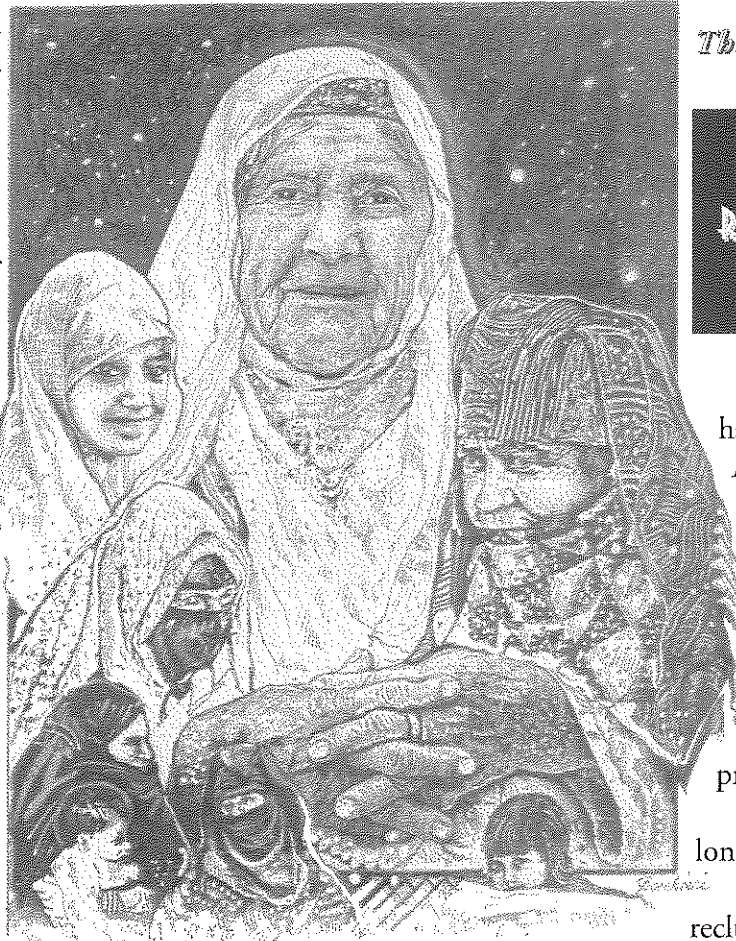
## Second profile:

### EVERYONE KNOWS HER NAME

Benazir Bhutto is very well-known. She was trained by her father for a life in politics.

Rich and well-educated, she studied at Radcliffe in the United States and the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom.

Despite the many differences in her background, education and experience from those of her illiterate neighbors, she also visits shrines to find spiritual help.



## Third profile:

### AN AFGHAN REFUGEE IN NORTH AMERICA

She is 18 years old, and has now lived in North America for 5 years. Under pressure from her mother and extended family, she has reluctantly agreed to marry a Muslim three times her age. He has been married previously.

Suddenly she is no longer a carefree schoolgirl. She has become a recluse. When she leaves her home, she is always heavily veiled. Her younger sisters are shocked by the changes in her life.

Within each Muslim country there are many varieties of Islam: urban in contrast to rural; Sunni in contrast to Shia; liberal, secular or fundamentalist; Muslims in minority as compared with Muslims in majority. There are really no acceptable stereotypes.

There are as many varieties within the household of Islam as there are among those who call themselves Christians. But one thing is for certain: God sent Jesus Christ to earth to die for the sins of all—including Muslim women.

Let believers everywhere reach out to these people in friendship and love—thus giving opportunity to share with Muslims a clear message of Jesus.

This article is condensed from a chapter in a book by CMM called "Through Muslim Eyes." You can receive a copy of this book, by sending \$3 to CMM, 2032 E. Kearney, #205, Springfield, MO 65803.

# IDENTIFYING WITH A SUFFERER

Condensed from an article by Alex Buchan in *Compass Direct*

In recent months, many Chinese women living in Indonesia have had the unfortunate experience of being raped at the hands of radical Muslims. Alex Buchan interviewed one young victim on the very day that Lt. Gen. Moetojib, the Indonesian army's chief of intelligence, announced that after a two-month riot investigation, all the rape stories had been "fabricated." The woman's tale was shocking.

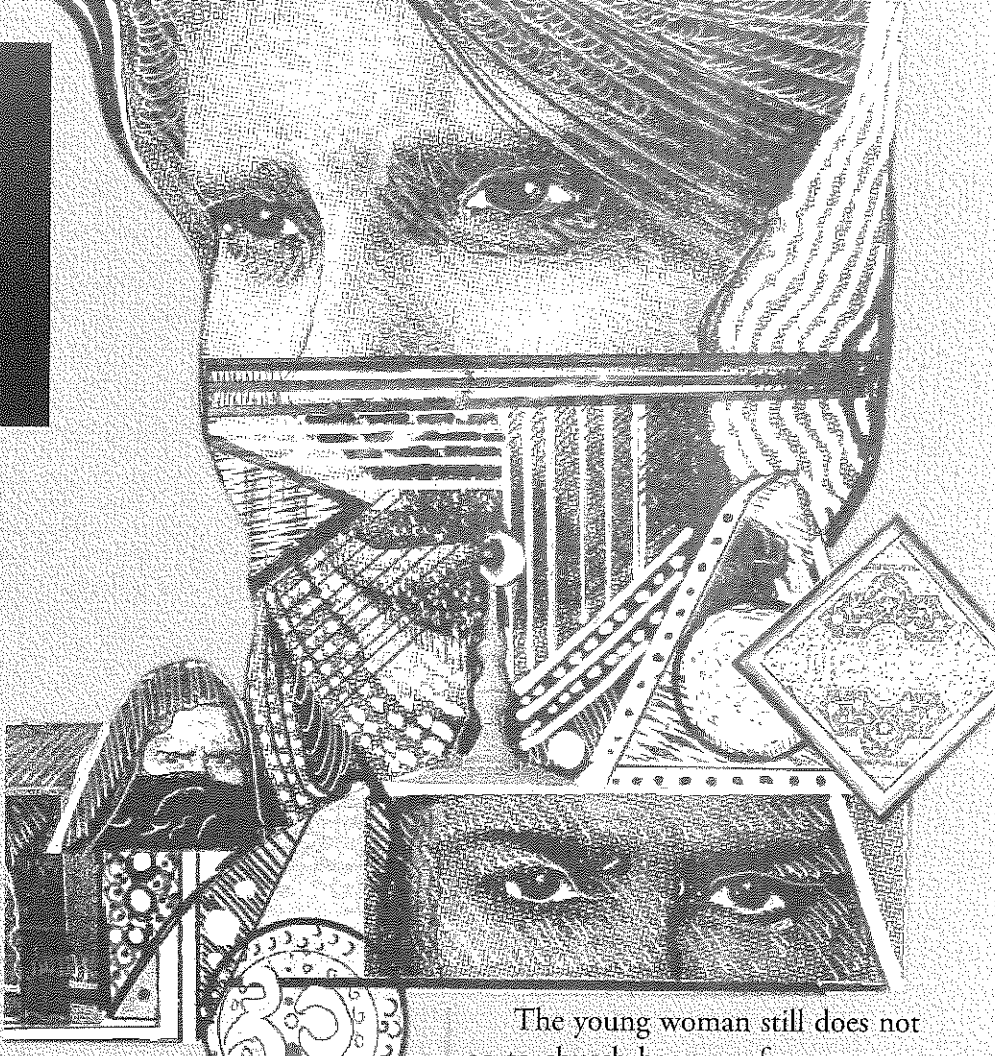
Traveling on a bus with her brother through Jakarta, she was dragged off the bus by a mob of poorly dressed young men. They tore off her clothes and forced her to run through the streets naked. Herding her into a garage, they raped her for two hours, forcing her brother to watch. As she passed out, the ringleader mutilated her with a piece of barbed wire.

During the rape she couldn't stop thinking, *Why is God not striking these men dead?*

Waking up while a surgeon was sewing her back together, she had to face the fact that the horrible thing *had* happened and that her relationships with everyone, including God, would be different from that point forward.

Furious with God for allowing it to happen, she stopped praying.

One night when she was afraid to go to sleep because of the reoccurring nightmares, she picked up her Bible. Immediately the pages fell open at Lamentations 5:11. In her



Contemporary English Version she read, "*On Zion and everywhere in Judah our wives and daughters are being raped.*"

She was absolutely astonished. She recalls, "It was a shock to see that my experience, and indeed the experiences of the Chinese Indonesian community, was in the Bible. The sudden descent into anarchy where there had been civilization only moments before; the terrible atrocities perpetrated by evil people against God's chosen—God had seen it all before...it was in the Bible."

What also was strange comfort to her was the fact that she could see no resolution in Lamentations.

"God was silent as His people cried to him in Lamentations, and silent for long periods in other parts of the Bible," she said.

The young woman still does not go to church because of one reason: *churchgoers cannot handle a lament.*

Alex Buchan said he tried to identify with her when he went to church the Sunday following the interview. All of the songs were of victory and triumph—militaristic, confident and loud.

"I saw for the first time how hard it would be for someone to go to church and simply lament," Buchan relates. "Everyone would crowd around trying to perk her up, or they would tire of her gloom and mutter about her *negative spirit*."

But lamenting is part of the Bible; it is part of the faith, and it is part of the persecuted Church. "The Church has to willingly 'weep with those who weep,' knowing that in God's time He will bring healing and triumph if we are willing to identify with the sufferer in his or her pain."

# CMM'S NEW ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR IN PLACE

God has blessed the Center for Ministry to Muslims by bringing Missionaries Jim and Theda Bennett to us. Jim will serve as associate director of our ministry.

They began their missions ministry in Jordan in 1974. During their 15 years there, Jim served as pastor of the Evangelistic Center and as director of the Jordan Theological College in Amman.

In 1989, Dr. Bennett accepted the appointment as president of Continental Theological Seminary (CTS), in Brussels, Belgium. Under Dr. Bennett's leadership, CTS inaugurated the first Pentecostal graduate program in Europe.

Feeling God leading them back to Jordan, the Bennetts returned there in 1996. Jim again directed the college in Amman. He also served as the Assemblies of God education director for the Middle East and North Africa. In that position he conducted seminars on Islam in many countries and held leadership seminars for national pastors.

Working with CMM, Dr. Bennett will be traveling internationally to teach Islamic seminars and help prepare national constituencies and Bible colleges to reach out to the Muslim world. He will also conduct Islamic seminars in churches and colleges here in the U.S., help prepare missionaries for ministry in Islamic cultures, and encourage regular prayer for Muslims.

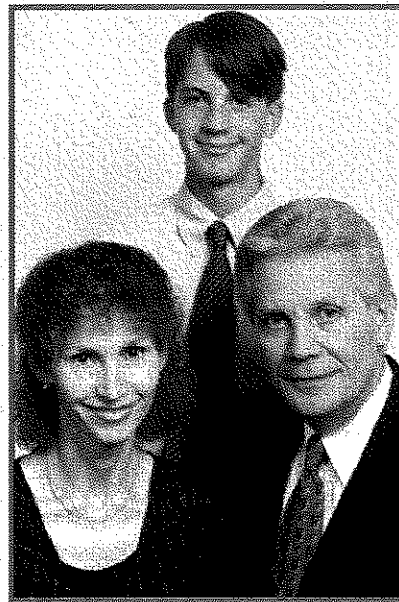
"Our family has lived in regions where Muslims account for 95 percent of the population," Jim shares. "While the percentage of Muslims in Western countries is much smaller, we must remember that there are now 1.2 billion Muslims worldwide. This is a rapidly-growing mission field that is in desperate need of the gospel."

Before receiving missionary appointment, the Bennetts pastored churches in Arkansas. Both Jim and Theda completed B.A. degrees in missions at Southwestern Assemblies of God University in Waxahachie, Texas. Jim also completed an M.A. degree in intercultural communications at the Assemblies of God Seminary in Springfield,

Missouri. His doctor of missiology degree was earned at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois.

"Without a doubt, God brought Jim and Theda to us," related Ron Peck, director of CMM. "Our ministry has already been blessed by their many talents. Jim's background in education and his many years of living and working among Muslims will be great assets to our ministry."

Please add the Bennetts to your prayer list, asking that God will continue to guide and protect them as they labor in His harvest fields.



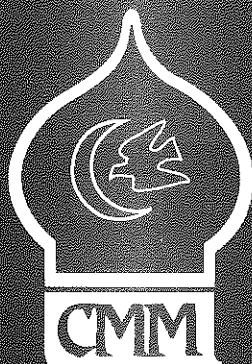
*Jim, Theda & Ben Bennett*

## FAGERLAND TEACHES BLOC SESSION AT EVANGEL UNIVERSITY

At the invitation of Dr. Michael Palmer, chairman of the Biblical Studies and Philosophy Department, CMM team member Dale Fagerland recently taught a bloc course "Approaches to Muslims."

Thirty highly-motivated students attended Fagerland's 5-week session. Nearly all testified that God had opened their eyes, softened their hearts and increased their understanding of the religion of Islam and its followers.

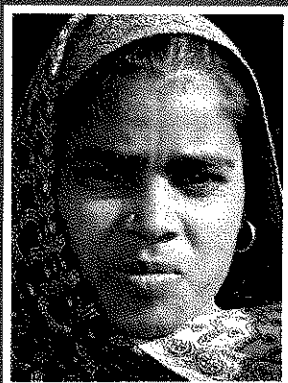
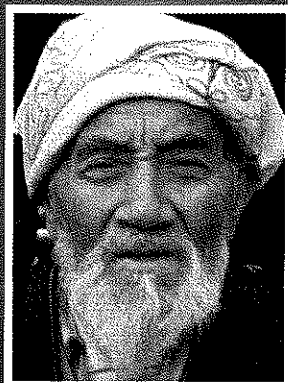
Karen, one of the students, related, "I will confess that when this class was offered, I didn't have a heart for Muslims. I thought of them, as do most Americans, as killers and terrible people. I saw them as lost and without hope, and I didn't care to know anything about them. I saw them as unreachable, really. My eyes have been opened to these people. God knew I needed this class to put aside my prejudices and be prepared for the work ahead of me among Muslims."



# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...



Praying for Muslims  
Around the World!



Friday, January 1, 1999. Please pray

...for the country of Bangladesh which has experienced much devastation and loss of life from flooding caused by monsoon rains. Pray that God will use this disaster to turn many to Christ as the Church reaches out to help those affected.

...for village churches in rural areas of Upper Egypt who are without pastors because of the economic situation. Pray for those who are pastoring in severe circumstances.

...for the CMM team that is teaching overseas contract workers in the Philippines the next two weeks. Pray that those who participate will be challenged and gain insights in sharing the good news with Muslims as they go to work in Middle East countries.

Friday, January 8, 1999. Please pray

...that God will give wisdom to Christian Solidarity International as they buy slaves from the Arab militias in Sudan and set them free. So far 500 have been released. Pray that God will provide the funds needed to do this.

...that the families of active Christians in Iran may be encouraged and strengthened. Various wives of leaders have been called in for interrogation recently.

...that God will raise up more workers for the Muslim harvest field. Many more workers are needed.

Friday, January 15, 1999. Please pray

...for the many who are responding to the Jesus film as it is being shown to many Muslim audiences. Pray there will be adequate follow-up to help them grow in their newfound faith.

...for Faisal Abdallah who has been released from prison in Sudan. Pray that he may be restored to health and that he will be kept safe from Islamic radicals who might want to kill him.

...that God will intervene and bring peace and stability to Albania. The conflict between the government and the opposition party has created hardships for the people.

Friday, January 22, 1999. Please pray

...for the protection of indigenous Christians in Northern Caucasus. Violence has been growing in the region.

...that God will nurture the handful of Yemeni believers and multiply their numbers. Ask Him to comfort and encourage Yemeni believers imprisoned for their faith.

...for the situation in Rwanda. Forty percent of the war widows have married Muslim men because of the reduced number of available non-Muslim men.

Friday, January 29, 1999. Please pray

...for the CMM team member teaching an Islamics class at Evangel Theological Seminary in Nigeria the next two weeks. Pray for protection and for his ministry to impact the students.

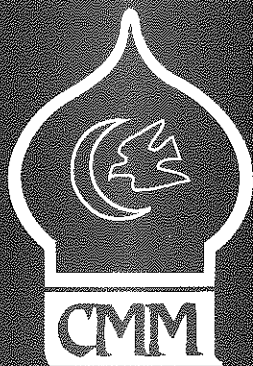
...for ongoing translation work of Christian literature into various languages in Central Asia, especially for the translation of the Bible which is not yet completed for the Central Asian countries.

...for good cooperation among ministries working in Morocco, that they present a united front as they reach out to Muslims.

*I urge, then, first of all that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone.*

—(1 Timothy 2:1, NIV)

# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...



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

## Praying for Muslims Around the World!

Friday, February 5, 1999. Please pray

*...for the CMM team conducting Muslim Awareness Seminars in Burkina Faso and the Cameroon for the next three weeks. Pray that some of the participants will become full-time workers among Muslims as the Lord challenges them.*

*...for a Christian Filipino woman who is working among the Sundanese Muslims in Indonesia. God has blessed her ministry, but she is feeling oppressed physically and emotionally. Pray for divine victory, enabling her to minister effectively.*

*...that God will provide Christian wives for Muslim converts in isolated areas of North Africa where the Church only consists of young single men.*

Friday, February 12, 1999. Please pray

*...that God will encourage Muslim-background Malays who have embraced Christ as their King. Pray for grace in the midst of persecution.*

*...for two new believers who have been threatened with eviction from their village because of their faith in Christ.*

*...for a worker in the Middle East who is quite stressed by the secular job which enables him to remain in the country. Pray that God will intervene in his situation.*

*...for Christians in Iraq who are suffering from the economic blockade. The dramatic situation is tempting many Christians to disobey God's Word in order to survive or to get material benefit.*

Friday, February 19, 1999. Please pray

*...for the Fulani Christians who were able to meet together and be encouraged at a recent Fulani conference in Nigeria. Pray that they will continue faithful in serving the Lord in spite of persecution and isolation.*

*...for Christian fellowships in Uzbekistan that have been unsuccessful in applying for registration because of the stringent rules.*

*...that the Lord will provide teachers for a team of workers in Lebanon.*

*...for the Christians in the Caucasus, especially in Dagestan. Muslim activists want an Islamic state in the region and are working to destabilize at least one government. Dagestan is under pressure in this regard. Pray that God will intervene.*

Friday, February 26, 1999. Please pray

*...that God will create a hunger for himself among the Luri along the western border of Iran. Pray that the handful of Luri believers in Iraq will reach out to the Luri in Iran, among whom there are no known believers.*

*...that the few Maninka believers in Guinea will be encouraged to continue growing in their relationship with the Lord.*

*...that Christians will be wise in their use of the Internet to bring the gospel into many homes but not jeopardize the lives and ministry of people working in "sensitive" countries.*

*...for a reproducing church among the Acehnese of Indonesia.*