

GO NEWS

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FROM FEAR TO Family...

"I think I need to be honest," the evangelist said, looking me straight in the eye. "I know that I am supposed to love the people I'm reaching out to, but when I think of Muslims, I think of terrorism, political posturing, and burqas. That's why I'm here tonight: I need to learn to see the real people behind the stereotype of Islam."

'Here' was a four-week series of seminars that I was running in Gloucester, UK, entitled *Understanding your Muslim Neighbour*. Aimed at people from local churches, the seminars were designed to inform and equip the churches, and help them build good relationships with their Muslim neighbours.

This is not the first such course that Urban Vision, Interserve's cross cultural team in England and Wales, has held. Another course, called *Friendship First*, was developed by Steve Bell, the England and Wales National Director. About six weeks in length, the *Friendship First* course aims to bring about a deeper understanding of, and attitude change towards, our Muslim neighbours, and sums up the ethos of Urban Vision: how can we call anyone to Christ unless we first show them that they are loved?

Tim and Rachel Green have also developed an interactive course, which draws on the *Friendship First* material. It runs over ten weekday evenings, and helps people engage with their Muslim friends, and be able to present Christ to them in a culturally sensitive way. The most recent course (it runs every year in their home town) had nearly 40 participants from a dozen local churches. Now this model is spreading to other towns. The aim is for ordinary Christians to gain the vision, confidence and skills they need to share Christ with ordinary Muslim people. Mission to Muslims is not just a task for specialists!

The 2001 census revealed that about 1.6 million Muslims, from many

different cultures and backgrounds, live in the UK. While that's only 2.7% of the population, because of media coverage (including some Christian media approaches) and a certain strain of politically active Islam, many Britons have an underlying sense of fear and of 'being taken over'.

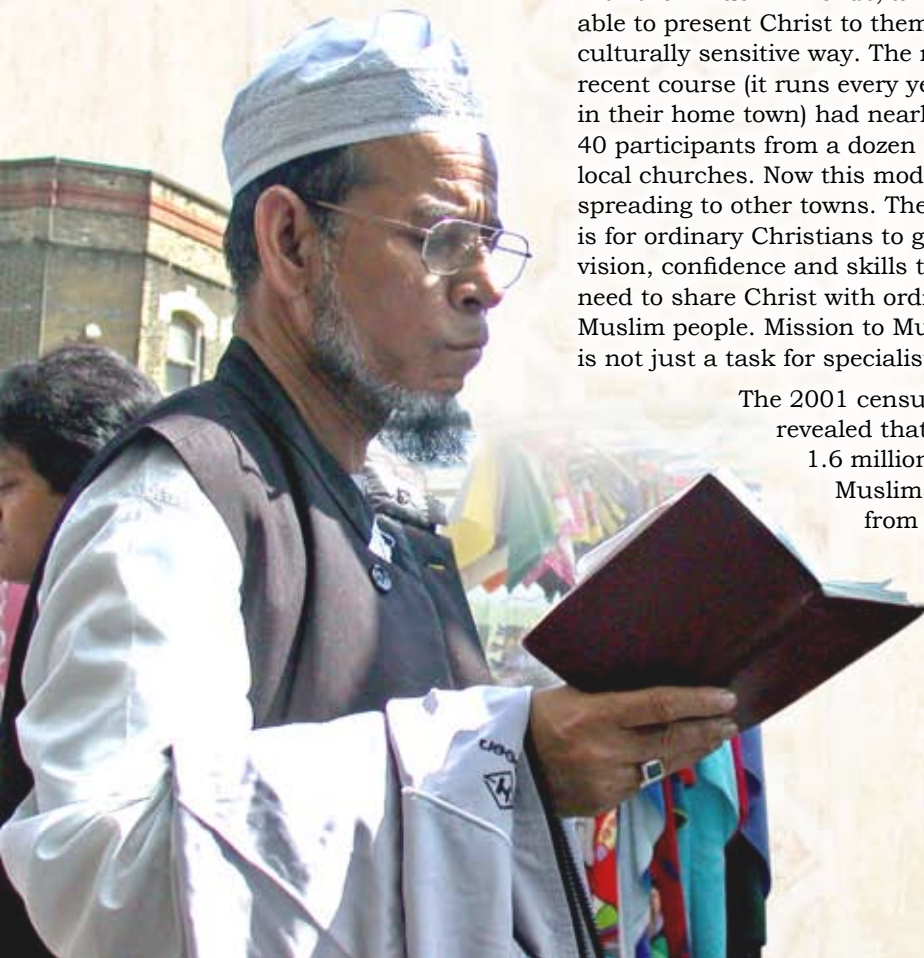
Urban Vision is working towards breaking down that media-fed fear, and encouraging Christians to engage with Muslims in long term friendship. And as Christians step out of their comfort zones, lives are being changed and communities transformed - not just amongst Muslims, but also amongst those Christians who are reaching out.

While people from Muslim situations are used to living faith publicly, worshipping communally and praying together frequently, church-goers in the UK are used to praying in private and being slightly embarrassed about faith in public. To be open to the needs of new followers of Jesus from a Muslim background is to be challenged to be public, communal and family in ways that take us beyond our comfort zone, and modify our existing church structures.

And yet, isn't this the challenge of Jesus Himself? Is this what we're called to do and have maybe slipped away from?

Jesus calls us all to follow Him, from stereotype to neighbour, from fear to family. In doing so we too are changed and new family members are found and welcomed by the Father. ✨

Colin Edwards is the Team Leader for Urban Vision. Originally from NZ, Colin is coming back on Home Assignment in August. If you are interested in hearing Colin speak, or inviting him for a speaking engagement, please contact Johannes (johannes@interserve.org.nz).



FROM THE DIRECTOR

What a relief! The friendly lady at the check-in counter at Bangkok Airport had responded positively to my request for exit row seats, and as we settled in and I stretched my oversize legs I was grateful for not having to fold as usual into the cramped row space behind.

But God had more in mind than giving me temporary relief on my journey home. A few moments later a young man, quite obviously Arab, took the seat next to me. Now I am a friendly enough person, and enjoy connecting with people, but when I get on an airplane I usually just shut down, watch a movie, and veg out for a while. I really don't want to talk.

This time, however, I felt that small, inner voice prompting me to be friendly, to reach out. And another difference was I had just spent days on a quiet beach, with plenty of time

to relax, read, and abide, thoroughly enjoying connecting with myself, my wife and with Jesus. I was filled up and – without trying or having to work hard at it – ‘overflowing’.

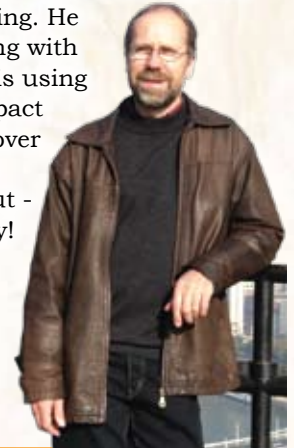
And so we chatted and got to know each other a bit, soon moving onto deeper stuff. I asked him about his beliefs as a Muslim, and shared a bit about being a follower of Jesus. I asked him what he understood about Jesus, and was able to draw his attention to the fact that we, too, don't believe that God had sexual relations with Mary, or that she is part of the God we worship. And he shared how as a student in New Zealand he doesn't attend the mosque regularly, but instead visits a Christian student group from time to time, out of a desire to understand better what they believe.

Encounters along the path of life,

another piece of the puzzle for a seeker... being a witness to the God we love doesn't have to be a slog. It flows easy if the cup is full, and many of our Muslim (or other-believing neighbours) may simply be just waiting for that to happen.

I am looking forward to our Interserve Day in May, and our time with Bernie, whose cup is certainly full and overflowing. He will be sharing with us how God is using his life to impact Muslims all over the place, so don't miss out - register today!

John



MISSION TO North Africa

Getting there had its surprises and challenges, such as being escorted off our flight in Dubai by two Emirati policemen, but our recent short-term mission trip to a Muslim-majority North African country was very successful.

We had been invited back (after a similar outreach last year) to teach conversational English at a university in the country's second-largest city. Three of the team made it into the country without any problems, but when Mitch and I tried to fly out of Dubai, after being assured by the university that our visas were waiting, we hit a snag. The airline wanted to ensure that our visas were in order, so we confidently gave them the university's contact details, then talked our way onto the plane. And were promptly escorted off again when it was discovered the visas hadn't yet been issued.

On our first evening there, we went for a walk after dinner through the vegetable market. Grace was enthusiastically taking photos when three policemen demanded her camera. When we refused, we were taken to the police station for questioning. We called the university who contacted the vice-chancellor who rang the Chief of Police, who then released us. Surprisingly, the incident had a positive outcome, as it raised our profile in the community, and we received cheery waves from the police wherever we went.

Over 70 took part in the course we taught, including the faculty from several universities and Masters-level students. The course, called 'Understanding, coping with, and implementing change', was highly participative, and included stories from the Bible, connecting them with the concept of change. The team

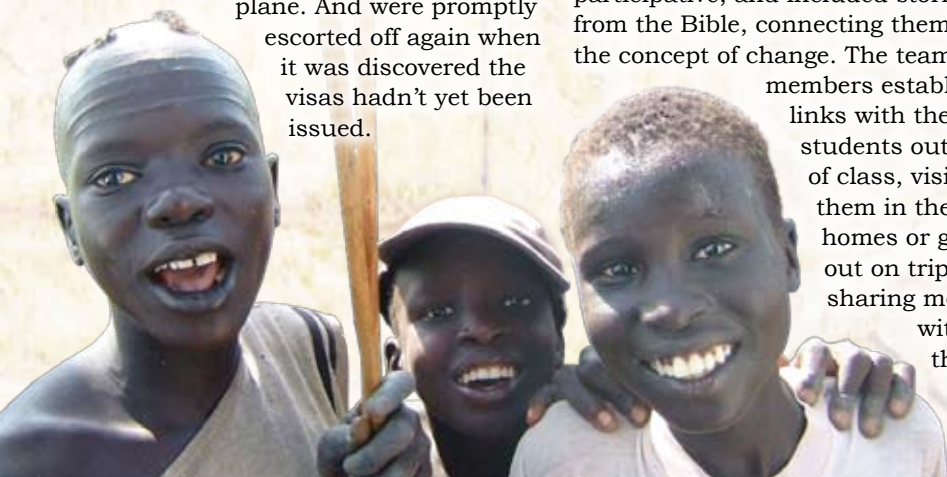
members established links with their students outside of class, visiting them in their homes or going out on trips or sharing meals with them.

These were opportunities for deeper sharing, talking about personal and spiritual issues. We prayed for some of our students at different times and the scriptures were shared.

In my speech at the closing ceremony, in the presence of the Vice Chancellor and the Dean, I told the students, "Over the past week and a half, we've heard stories of change in the lives of the prophets: Adam and Eve, Noah, Joseph, David, and Jesus. What was common in all these stories was the power and grace of God. These are not just historical stories of people who lived long ago – they are just as true for us today because God is alive and working today. It is true that as Christians and Muslims we will understand God's work differently, but we can also declare that we all seek to serve and worship God as we best understand Him."

There was a real sense of spiritual openness amongst the people, and it seems that widespread Sufism has softened some of the hard edge of the way Islam is practised. Our prayer is that God will continue to open up doors and hearts in this country. ☺

Bernie will be speaking at our upcoming Interserve Day - see back page for details and how to register. If you are interested in joining a similar team with Bernie next year, please get in touch with our office.



ON TRACK NEWS

Our On Track programme offers short-term service opportunities, that give a taste of what mission to the hard places is like. For ages 18-75+, On Trackers serve from one month up to two years. Planning a gap year, OE, elective, sabbatical? Or wondering what to do in retirement? Contact us to arrange your tailor-made service opportunity!

Amazing time in Central Asia

18-year-old Alana recently completed 11 months On Track in Central Asia, helping teach Partners' children.

"I think the biggest thing I learned was that God really can fulfill every need! Not just the big obvious ones like money, food and shelter, but ones like loneliness, feeling sick, and grumping at the kids that I was teaching.

"Travelling to a far away country

where I didn't know the language, having a limited peer network, coping with temperature extremes I never knew existed, it's an understatement to say that God helped me through it, and kept me enjoying the challenges and being excited about where I was. The circumstances really forced me to lean heavily on God and brought me into a stronger relationship with Him.

"I had to learn the local language to get around, and made several blunders, such as asking a vegetable seller how much her swimming pool was (the word for cucumbers and swimming pool is very similar).

"Being over there taught me that it doesn't matter what plans we make, if God is not in them, there is no point! So I'm listening for His voice, and waiting to see where He takes me now. And I want to encourage as many young people as I possibly can to step out and do what I did!" ☺

On Track in India

Sarah-Kate Flinn and Kate Forman are on a two-month placement, teaching children at Mukti Mission in India. To follow their adventure, check out Kate's blog at <http://k84man.blogspot.com/>

"Mukti Mission is a centre for destitute women and children, and contains a hospital, retirement home, church, schools, a centre for the blind, special needs school, nursery, outreach/evangelism centre, and housing for the 200+ girls, women and staff who live and work here.

"It is an amazing and inspiring place. There are so many committed people here doing huge things to be a light in the community, rescuing abandoned babies, providing for widows, single mothers, and the disabled. I hope that during our stay we can do what we can to aid the mission, but I know that we will probably gain a lot more from this experience than we will give." ☺

PARTNER NEWS

Long-term Partners form the core of our mission, serving some of the neediest people in Asia and the Arab world. We have more than 800 Partners worldwide, from many diverse cultures and nationalities. Contact us to learn more about how your faith, life experience and professional skills can change lives.

25 years in Nepal

Food technologist, Roydon Chesswas, is celebrating a quarter of a century of serving with Interserve in Nepal.

Over the years how have you seen the Nepali church grow? Change?

"When I first went to Nepal it was against the law for people to change their religion; anyone caught baptising believers was put in prison, and there was a lot of persecution. In 1992 the King agreed to a multi-party democracy, all political and religious prisoners were freed, and religious tolerance meant that people could practice their own religion without interference. The Nepali church is now one of the fastest growing in the world.

"In the past the church was an institution that people came into. Now there is more of a social

awareness and the church is starting to reach out into communities and offer help, particularly in the areas of food supply, income and education."

Memorable experience?

"I have fond memories of living in a village just outside Galyang. The teenage boys used to do their homework at my place because I had the brightest light in the village where there was no electricity. I learnt a lot from them about everyday village life and they didn't worry about asking embarrassing questions. I realised that they felt quite at home when one of them came in wearing just his undies."

Best experience?

"Being told by a young friend that I helped him to understand what love is. He was the youngest in his family and the main relationship with his siblings was to get bossed around and ordered to work for them."

Funny memory?

"A young neighbour wanted to watch me have a shower so that he could see what I did to make my skin and hair white."

What did you miss most about NZ?

"Mutton and beef. Being able to plan something and know that it's going to happen as planned. Not having to worry about power breaks and where

the water is coming from."

What has been the advantage in serving in Nepal long-term?

"I think I've helped a lot of people be able to do things for themselves that they might not otherwise have done. I've found that it doesn't take a big effort to help change people's lives: usually the small things make the most effective changes.

"The advantage of being long-term is that I now think more like a Nepali rather than a foreigner and see things from the Nepali point of view. As foreigners we see what people haven't got and want to give it to them. But with Nepali eyes we see that what foreigners want Nepalis to have isn't usually appropriate. We try to see what Nepalis want and build on that."

How has your view of faith changed/grown in your time in Nepal?

"The major change has been in stopping striving to do things for God and allowing God to use me. I don't have to attempt great things for God, I allow Him to attempt great things through me. Most of the great things are simple small seeds which grow. Mother Theresa said, 'God doesn't call us to be successful, He calls us to be faithful,' and I've found that liberating in simply being where God wants me to be and not having to make a big impression. ☺

BOOK CORNER

***Gospel for Muslims: An Eastern Telling of the Good News about Jesus Christ* is the latest book by Steve Bell, National Director for IS England and Wales.**

Steve (pictured right) is a recognised communicator with over thirty years experience in the area of Christian witness to Muslims. He has worked as a professional in the Middle East, a mission leader for the Islamic African Sahel and an analyst based in Britain. His travels in over ninety countries have given him a wide cross-cultural exposure.

The book is designed to be read by both Christians and Muslims and is a prophetic call to prayer for the redemption of the house of Islam. It will provide tools for examining what is biblical and what is merely cultural in western Christianity, examine what the non-negotiable elements of the "gospel" are, and how to convey those to people from Muslim backgrounds.



Publisher:
Authentic Media

Gospel for Muslims is currently in production. To pre-order your copy, contact the IS England and Wales office:
enquiries@isewi.org
www.interserve.org.uk

VACANCIES

Contact us to learn more about these positions. Many more vacancies are available on our website.

SOUTH EAST ASIA Physiotherapist, experienced in working with children with cerebral palsy, urgently needed.

SOUTH EAST ASIA Communications Manager urgently needed for an NGO that works with disadvantaged children. Visa provided (2+ years).

ARAB WORLD Doctors, nurses, dentists, health educators, physician assistants, nurse practitioners urgently needed (6-12+ months).

SOUTH ASIA Secondary School Science and Math Teacher urgently needed for an international school. Paid position (12+ months).

NORTH EAST ASIA Sports Programme Manager needed to train players, coaches and referees in Mongolia (6-12+ months).

CENTRAL ASIA Agricultural/Mechanical Engineer, to work with solar energy applications (12+ months).

PLEASE USE OUR LIBRARY! Did you know that we have a small library at our Interserve office, containing

mission-related books, videos and DVDs. Contact us today to find out more on how you can borrow them.



YOU ARE INVITED TO

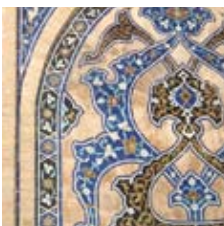


INTERSERVE DAY 2010



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Bernie is a teacher from Australia. A 20-year Interserve veteran, Bernie has a deep sensitivity for, and understanding of, the world of Islam and its people.



REGISTER NOW!

0800 446 464
09 630 0981

WHEN 9:30 am - 4:30 pm, 22 May 2010
WHERE Royal Oak Baptist Church, Auckland
COST \$25 (\$5 discount for unwaged)
RSVP by 27 April. Registration is needed for catering purposes.

WWW RESOURCES

Here are some great mission resources available on the Internet.

>> www.poodwaddle.com/worldclock.swf

A world clock with a difference, bringing eclectic statistics (population figures, diseases, environment, energy and food production etc) into relationship with time – an interesting exercise!

>> www.mislinks.org

A web-based missions directory with literally thousands of links to a vast array of missional topics, by all sorts of groups, writers, and at times folk with tremendous insights.

>> www.joshuaproject.net

Self-described as bringing definition to the unfinished task, the Joshua Project site is overflowing with statistics, information, resources and prayer foci for the least reached peoples of the earth.

0800 446 464
www.interserve.org.nz

Lives and communities transformed through encounter with Jesus Christ

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