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# CONNECT

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## A LIGHT HAS DAWNED

I don't know whether you're feeling disappointed or relieved that Christmas has passed for another year, but in this issue of *Connect*, one recurring theme, no matter where the stories are from, reminds me of a verse you may have heard recently:

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." (Isaiah 9:2)

We may rightly think our own culture seems dark, but many places in Africa are darker than we comprehend. Yet the glorious truth of the gospel is that our Saviour is the light of the world, and the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it! (John 8:12 and John 1:5)

As you read the stories contained here you will be amazed and encouraged by the power of the gospel as it transforms lives, communities and entire cultures from darkness into light. You will read about the work among the Laarim in South Sudan - as the gospel challenges their culture, new believers are making radical decisions to reject the status quo. In Tanzania, a Zigua village primary school is impacting an entire generation of Muslim children for Christ, and in North Africa, Muslims are having dreams about Jesus and testifying that he alone can bring light, healing and purpose.

Please join us in praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ living in dark places, that God would use them as his image-bearers, to bring the gospel of light and transformation to the people around them.

*Miriam*

Miriam Bryant,  
Mission Advisor for the north of England & Wales

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# WORK & CULTURAL RENEWAL

*“The most powerful way to show people the truth of Christianity is to serve the common good.”*

*By Timothy Keller*

I am often asked: “Should Christians be involved in shaping culture?” My answer is that we can’t not be involved in shaping culture. To illustrate this, I offer a very sad example. In the years leading up to the Civil War many southerners resented the interference of the abolitionists, who were calling on Christians to stamp out the sin of slavery. In response, some churches began to assert that it was not the church’s (nor Christians’) job to try to ‘change culture’ but only to preach the gospel and see souls saved. The tragic irony was that these churches were shaping culture. Their very insistence that Christians should not be changing culture meant that those churches were supporting the social status quo. They were defacto endorsing the cultural arrangements of the Old South. (For more on this chapter in American history, see Mark Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*.)

This is an extreme example, but it makes the point that when Christians work in the world, they will either assimilate into their culture and support the status quo or they will be agents of change. This is especially true in the area of work. Every culture works on the basis of a ‘map’ of what is considered most important. If God and his grace are not at the centre of a culture, then other things will be substituted as ultimate values. So every vocational field is distorted by idolatry.

Christian medical professionals will soon see that some practices make money for them but don’t add value to patients’ lives. Christians in marketing and business will discern accepted patterns of communication that distort reality or which play to and stir up the worst aspects of the human heart. Christians in business will often see among their colleagues’ behaviour that which seeks short-term financial profit at the expense the

company’s long-term health, or practices that put financial profit ahead of the good of employees, customers, or others in the community. Christians in the arts live and work in a culture in which self-expression is an end in itself. And in most vocational fields, believers face work-worlds in which ruthless, competitive behaviour is the norm.

There are two opposite mistakes that a Christian can make in addressing the idols of their vocational field. On the one hand they can seal off their faith from their work, labouring according to the same values and practices that everyone else uses. Or they may loudly and clumsily declare their Christian faith to their co-workers, often without showing any grace and wisdom in the way they relate to people on the job.

At Redeemer, especially through the Center for Faith and Work, we seek to help believers think out the implications of the gospel for art, business, government, media, entertainment, scholarship. We teach that excellence in work is a crucial means to gain credibility for our faith. If our work is shoddy, our verbal witness only leads listeners to despise our beliefs. If Christians live in major cultural centres and simply do their work in an excellent but distinctive manner it will ultimately produce a different kind of culture than the one in which we live now.

But I like the term ‘cultural renewal’ better than ‘culture shaping’ or ‘culture changing/transforming.’ The most powerful way to show people the truth of Christianity is to serve the common good. The monks in the Middle Ages moved out through pagan Europe, inventing and establishing academies, universities, and hospitals. They transformed local economies and cared for the weak through these new institutions. They didn’t set out to ‘get control’ of a pagan culture. They let the gospel change how they did their work and that meant they worked for others rather than for themselves. Christians today should be aiming for the same thing.

As Roman society was collapsing, St Augustine wrote *The City of God* to remind believers that in the world there are always two ‘cities’, two alternate ‘kingdoms.’ One is a human society based on selfishness and gaining power. God’s kingdom is the human society based on giving up power in order to serve. Christians live in both kingdoms, and although that is the reason for much conflict and tension, it also is our hope and assurance. The kingdom of God is the permanent reality, while the kingdom of this world will eventually fade away. 🙏

## ABOUT TIMOTHY KELLER



Timothy Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan, New York which he started in 1989 with his wife, Kathy, and three young sons. He is also the Chairman & Co-

Founder of Redeemer City to City (CTC), which starts new churches in New York and other global cities and publishes books and resources for ministry in an urban environment.

Dr. Keller's books, including the New York Times bestselling *The Reason for God* and *The Prodigal God*, have sold over 2 million copies and been translated into 25 languages.

This article was originally published at [timothykeller.com](http://timothykeller.com) and is used by permission.

For more on Dr. Keller's ministry, visit [citytocityafrica.com](http://citytocityafrica.com)







# OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CREATION

For an African, the land and the spirit world are very closely linked. The blessings that come from the land are directly related to the ancestors, and witchcraft is practised to ensure good crops. August Basson shares about the need to restore our right relationship with creation.

## BADLY BROKEN

At creation God created four key relationships for us, all of which were broken in the fall. We have our relationship with God himself, and our relationship with other people. Then there are two less obvious ones; our relationship with ourselves and our relationship with God's creation. The earth was given to us to work on and protect, but instead, we live in a world full of initiatives to save it from the damage we've inflicted. Teenagers give passionate speeches to make people aware that our planet is not doing well. It is broken!

Standing at a river on an island off the east coast of Africa, I watched as a man walked out of his house with a rubbish bin. Unceremoniously he dumps it into the river and it starts floating towards the ocean. The city council built a dump for all the rubbish to be collected in one place. The people protested and never used it. "It is a place where germs and diseases will fester. We will just keep doing what we have done all these years. We just walk to the edge of the river and throw all our rubbish into it. It will take it to the ocean. What is the problem, don't fix something that works!"

Our world is crying out for redemption, but how many sermons have you heard addressing our relationship with the earth? The work of Christ stretches far wider than we understand, and sometimes wider than we preach from our pulpits. We can be so focused on the salvation work of Christ that we forget where the story began. God created, he planted a garden in Eden. He walked with Adam and Eve there. As believers we need to pause and realise the work of Christ on the cross covered every aspect of life here on earth (Colossians 1:19-20).

Is it not time for us to start to walk with our Father in the garden he created for us? Is it not time for us to cry with him as we walk, repent, and work with him to restore it? As missionaries,



our work is incomplete if we overlook the relationship with God's creation. In many places in Africa people's hearts are closed to the gospel, but their ears are open to solutions to the challenges the environment throws at them. And so their ears become a highway to their hearts when practical solutions are offered to droughts and floods.

*"It is one thing for someone to let God into his heart, but it is another story altogether to let God reign in all aspects of life."*

When we sent the first 'Harvest' team to Tanzania in 2018 they went as farmers. As they worked, day in and day out, both on their own fields and on others' fields, trust started to grow. They taught farmers to pray about every step as they planted and grew crops. This changes the way people view the land and creation. It changes the way they see disasters like a hail storm or drought. It is one thing for someone to let God into his heart, but it is another story altogether to let God reign in all aspects of life.

Let us walk again with God in his garden, let's honour this relationship he created for us. Let's fix what we can. 🌱

## AUGUST

August Basson and his wife Anita established Growing Nations in Lesotho.







1-3 JANUARY  
**CHURCH DEVELOPMENT**



## AMONG THE ALAGWA

Owen and Miriam Pugh along with their children, Ella, Charlie, Imani and Cerys, have been living among the Alagwa since 2010. As well as discipling believers and helping them establish a church, the Pughs are involved in creating an oral Bible translation of the book of Luke.

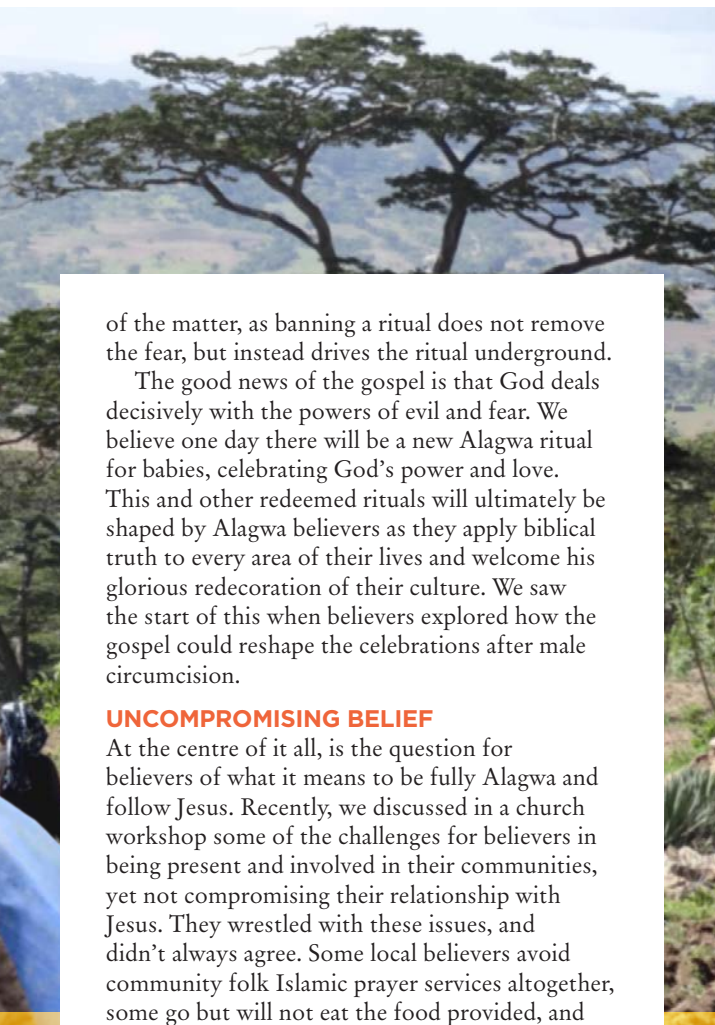
## REARRANGING THE FURNITURE

**E**ddie Arthur, in his excellent blog post ‘Gospel and Culture’ said: “When the homeless gospel comes into a culture as a guest, it is an awkward guest – quite rude in fact. Rather than just settling down to do things your way, the gospel starts to move the furniture around and redecorate the house.”

This is true for all of us; the Holy Spirit needs to redecorate our lives in areas we are often blind to.

And so it is true for the Alagwa. It is crucial to understand that rituals and rites exist because of felt needs within a culture. A white goat skin band around a baby’s wrist points to a fear that ancestral or evil spirits could attack the child. Historically, world religion missionaries have largely tended to forbid such practices. This fails to reach the heart





of the matter, as banning a ritual does not remove the fear, but instead drives the ritual underground.

The good news of the gospel is that God deals decisively with the powers of evil and fear. We believe one day there will be a new Alagwa ritual for babies, celebrating God's power and love. This and other redeemed rituals will ultimately be shaped by Alagwa believers as they apply biblical truth to every area of their lives and welcome his glorious redecoration of their culture. We saw the start of this when believers explored how the gospel could reshape the celebrations after male circumcision.

### UNCOMPROMISING BELIEF

At the centre of it all, is the question for believers of what it means to be fully Alagwa and follow Jesus. Recently, we discussed in a church workshop some of the challenges for believers in being present and involved in their communities, yet not compromising their relationship with Jesus. They wrestled with these issues, and didn't always agree. Some local believers avoid community folk Islamic prayer services altogether, some go but will not eat the food provided, and some will go, eat but not pray. There are no easy answers.

At a deep level of values, we also see how the gospel is rearranging the furniture. There is a lack of trust in these seemingly tight knit communities - people are often scared that if they prosper, others will try to curse them or hold them back. One Alagwa believer observed: it is like when Jesus told the leaders that they only cleaned the pot on the outside, but the inside was full of dirt. Some of our friendships are clean pots on the outside. We agreed that looking like a God follower on the outside but having a heart uncleansed by God meant it was impossible to truly love one another. Only Jesus can bring deep healing and true community here. Only the gospel can transform culture so that in Jesus the Alagwa can be all that they were created to be. 🙏

### 1 JAN • WEDNESDAY

Please pray for believers as they seek to work out what it means to be fully Alagwa and follow Jesus. Pray for them as they seek to honour their families, that they will find ways to do that without engaging in cultural practices which dishonour God.

### 2 JAN • THURSDAY

Pray for many Alagwa to understand their need to be clean on the inside, not just have the external appearance of good works. Pray for repentance and changed hearts, and that this ultimately may be a greater witness to the Alagwa community.

### 3 JAN • FRIDAY

Sickness is quite often thought to be sent by ancestral spirits and there are ceremonies to appease these spirits. Pray that the gospel will penetrate into every area of Alagwa life, that they will know healing and life to the full.

## ALAGWA FACTS

The Alagwa translators working to translate the Bible are a mixture of men and women, Christians and Muslims, young and old, those who can read and those who can't. It is taking one hour in the studio to produce one minute's worth of recording of the Gospel of Luke.

The Alagwa have an incredibly hospitable culture; there is a specific adjective (*Hhetut*) to describe someone who has enough to share but will not. It is pretty insulting to be called this.





## THAT THEY MIGHT EXPERIENCE JOY

One of our missionaries has recently begun serving in an area where the good news of Jesus is not welcome. We call these areas ‘creative access locations’ as to live there, workers need to have occupations that make sense to locals but that also allow them time and opportunities to creatively, and effectively, share the gospel.

### AMONG DEAD PEOPLE

**F**or the first time in my life I am living somewhere where the gospel is not known. It is hard to describe, but a vivid memory from my first visit to this city was the feeling of being among dead people. There was no genuine joy, no hope, no peace and this is a feeling that persists.

Recently I was teaching a private student, a very wealthy lady who has a successful career and lives in the most exclusive and expensive part of the city. She drives a very expensive car, always has perfect hair and clothes and lives a very interesting life. She has travelled extensively and has even met royalty. She was good fun and I enjoyed our lessons. One morning, I asked her to describe the most joyful experience she’d had, and her answer was very unexpected. She told me without hesitation that she had never known joy. She has everything materially a person might dream of having, but despite her great wealth, she has not experienced joy.

### HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

Later that day I went to my language helper’s home. She lives in a building with bare concrete floors, exposed water pipes and electrical wiring, windows without glass and simple





*“She has everything materially a person might dream of having but despite her great wealth, she has not experienced joy.”*

furniture. She has three children, one of whom has cerebral palsy. She is at the opposite end of the wealth spectrum to my private student. She is a devout follower of Islam. She is incredibly generous and kind and patient, but she can't go to the mosque to pray which means she can't build up the same amount of good points as men. She laments that there will not be many women in paradise because this is what her Prophet has said. She is too poor to be able to go to Mecca to have her past sins absolved. She knows that her good deeds are never going to exceed her bad deeds. She feels hopeless.

The gospel is not known by either of these women but how their lives would change if they knew the truth! I am no longer teaching the first lady as she has moved to another city. God in his kindness has been giving me opportunities to share with my language helper and she is becoming more open to discussing spiritual matters. I really long for her to know the one who is the way, the truth and the life. How her life and heart and family would be transformed! She would still be poor in the eyes of the world, but her burden of sin would be lifted from her and she would know that Jesus has a place prepared for her in the new creation. 🙏

### COULD YOU PRAY?

To download creative access prayer prompts:



Go to [eu.aimint.org/pray/creativeaccess](https://eu.aimint.org/pray/creativeaccess)





## 4-10 JANUARY OUTREACH & EVANGELISM



### WEEKENDFOCUS 4-5 JANUARY

Pray that as Safina Street Network staff share the good news with those living on the streets of Tanzania, these young people would know reconciliation with both God and men.

### 6 JAN • MONDAY

267 children and young people are currently being helped by the Safina Street Network with their school education. Pray for those who recently sat final exams as they look to the next chapter of their lives. Pray too for the new school budget of 2020, that God would provide for school fees and school equipment.

### 7 JAN • TUESDAY

The Safina Street Network is currently working on the development and construction of a Life Skills and Vocational Training Centre. Pray that God would raise up one more teacher for the cooking school and that the official registration of the school would go smoothly.



# LONGING TO BE LOVED

Safina Street Network is an outreach service working with vulnerable children and young people in Dodoma and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. They tell us one boy's story.

**N**ico, together with his twin sister, were the oldest in their family. He grew up in a small village in the southern highlands of Tanzania, but his childhood was not a happy one. He felt rejected and often would get beaten by his father. At the age of eight he was sent away to live with his uncle to help him work in the fields. But Nico wanted to go to school like other children. One day he stole some chickens from his uncle and ran away to the nearby town. He sold the chickens and bought a bus ticket to Dar es Salaam. That was the beginning of his life as a street boy. He soon met other street children and heard about a centre which helped street children to go to school. He joined the centre and finally started school. At the same time his new friends also introduced him to many other things like alcohol, drugs and sex. Still his greatest pain was loneliness and he longed to be loved and to belong.

One day he heard the other children talking about some 'Mamas' from the Safina Street Network who would meet with street children and tell them about God. He was curious and went along to the next meeting. He liked the singing, teaching and games so he continued to go along. One day God's word pierced his heart and started him on a journey to really seek God for himself. At a later meeting, he gave his life to Jesus. When the centre he had joined was no longer able to help him with his education, he asked Safina for help. Joining Safina and attending a weekly youth Bible study really helped his spiritual growth. After finishing his secondary education, he studied social work and became the leader of a Christian student group. Today he works as a social worker with Safina, witnessing to many others how God changed his life and filled it with love, hope and purpose. 🙏

## 8 JAN • WEDNESDAY

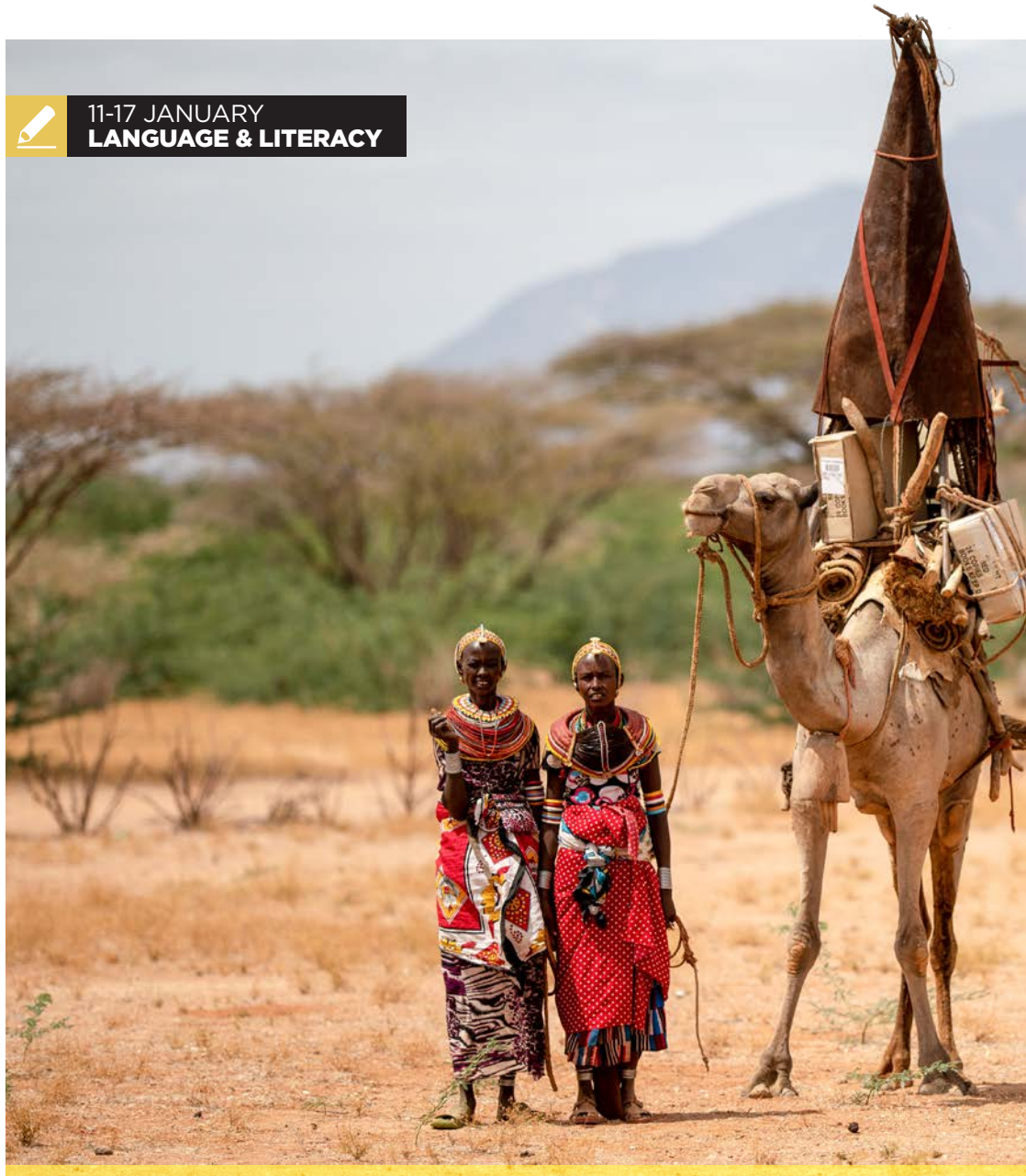
Pray that the whole Safina team would seek God's kingdom and his righteousness first in everything they do. Pray that they would see God's leading and guiding as well as his provision for all their needs for this year and beyond.

## 9 JAN • THURSDAY

Pray for the development of godly leaders in all of Safina's locations. Pray that the structures Safina has set up would promote leadership growth and development, and that leaders would be willing to listen and to follow God's leading as to how he wants Safina to develop.

## 10 JAN • FRIDAY

500 former street children have become followers of Christ through the work of the Safina Street Network. Join the staff at Safina in praying for them to love and serve their Saviour with an undivided heart. Pray that they would bring about change in their communities so that fewer children end up on the streets.



## THE RENDILLE

The Rendille are semi-nomadic pastoralists who live in the Kaisut Desert east of Lake Turkana, northern Kenya. They live in 'manyattas' or homesteads of 70-100 houses, and dress in bright colours and beads.

### 13 JAN • MONDAY

Pray for the Lord to strengthen and encourage Rendille Christians who are seeking to share the gospel more widely. Pray that the Scriptures will be loved, cherished, read, taught and obeyed in Rendille households, and for the Word of God to spread rapidly.

### 14 JAN • TUESDAY

Tirrim Secondary School, a Christian school among the Rendille, moved location in April. The new site has a better water supply, is closer to the Rendille villages, but further from the local town so students won't be distracted. Pray that the students would benefit from the move.





## IN MY OWN LANGUAGE

Join us in giving thanks for the completion of the New Testament in the Rendille language.

**I**n Korr, one of Kenya's northern frontier towns, the air seems to be constantly stirring. Traditionally, the Rendille are nomads. Traditionally, they do what they must to survive in a hostile environment. Traditionally, they have no access to Scripture in their language. Things have changed.

The day was a crescendo. What started quietly as a small gathering of local believers and missionaries became a major cultural celebration. The climax featured the most prized possession in traditional Rendille culture – camels. And on their backs were boxes of freshly-printed Rendille New Testaments. Escorting them in was a procession of dancers and singers.

The Bible dedication event marked the culmination of a 37-year translation journey begun by now-retired AIM missionaries Nick and Lynn Swanepoel, who set out to put the Rendille language in written form. The New Testaments represent the combined effort of Africa Inland Mission, Bible Translation & Literacy (BTL), Seed Company, and other generous partners from around the world.

Rendille Pastor, David Gargule, of the Africa Inland Church, Korr, had the privilege of delivering the first sermon from the Rendille New Testament. He summed up the translation accomplishment saying, "My morning devotional holds deeper meaning now that I can read the words of God in my own language." 🙏

### 15 JAN • WEDNESDAY

Please pray for the Muslim students studying at Tirrim school. Pray that the Word of God that is shared would be planted in their minds and that through this God would draw them to himself. Please pray for breakthroughs to encourage staff and students.

### 16 JAN • THURSDAY

As well as providing the New Testament in the Rendille language, the team were also able to share 500 audio New Testaments for those who can't read. Pray that access to God's Word in their heart language would lead to real transformation among the Rendille.

### 17 JAN • FRIDAY

Pray that the Rendille people will see the lives of their Christian friends and family and be convinced the gospel is true. Pray that they won't succumb to the influence of Islam, but will instead share the gospel with the Muslim teachers who have been sent to convert them.



## A CHANGED LIFE

Jessica Goldschmidt works with youth in Rwanda, coordinating 3d Christian Camps, where young people can explore Christianity and be trained for future ministry. She shares Arnold's story.

**B**aptised as a Catholic when he was small, Arnold's church attendance actually meant playing outside it. He started taking drugs in secondary school and as he managed to pass his secondary school exams without praying, he figured he didn't need God. His cousin, who is on the camp committee, mentioned our camps to him. He didn't fit the 'target' group for our ministry training camp; he wasn't saved! But he came. He came without a Bible and didn't know what to do during the personal devotion time as he couldn't read

the Bible passage. At some point, he told his cousin who lent him his Bible. He could then read but he couldn't understand. One of the counsellors encouraged him to pray and ask for the Holy Spirit to help him understand what he was reading. It worked! During the camp he was introduced to the gospel. After spending time with the camp teachers, he received Christ as his Saviour. Arnold says that was the point when everything changed. He was filled with so much joy. His Christian friends were so happy when he told them. He had tried to change his life on his own before, but he hadn't managed. Now, the drug addiction he had struggled with had completely gone. His friends who were taking drugs with him saw that his life changed. They want the same thing too! He is going to church and has made friends who can help him. His prayer is to see his parents and siblings come to know Christ. 🙏



## 20 JAN • MONDAY

Please pray specifically for the campers who have attended our camps and made a personal decision to follow Christ; pray that they would continue in their commitment and live in obedience to him.

## 21 JAN • TUESDAY

Please pray for Arnold, that as he lives out his new faith, his parents, siblings and friends would also turn to Christ because of his example. Pray that they would have the right people come alongside them to offer discipleship and encouragement.

## 22 JAN • WEDNESDAY

Please pray for the Bible study groups that have started in different churches following training camps, that the youth would be transformed as they study God's word together.

## 23 JAN • THURSDAY

Please pray for Guillaume, who started two new Bible study groups last year in two churches; for courage and perseverance as he meets with those young people.

## 24 JAN • FRIDAY

Please pray for the grounds we use to run our camps; that if it is God's will, we would be able to continue running our camps there (there is mention of those grounds possibly being sold).

## WEEKENDFOCUS

### 25-26 JANUARY

Please pray for Albert who leads our camp committee as he has started the journey into married life. Pray he and his wife would be a couple that are an example to many other young people.

## 27 JAN • MONDAY

Please pray for the camp committee members in general as they meet, plan, think of new ideas for this coming year, and serve in this ministry.

## 28 JAN • TUESDAY

Please pray for Pacifique and the people involved in getting Tubasange, a Rwandan mission organisation,

registered. Its vision is, "that every local church in Rwanda be centred on Christ and involved in inviting the least reached people groups of Africa into God's global worship."

## 29 JAN • WEDNESDAY

Please pray for the university students and others who have gone through the Kairos Course. Pray that the course would not just have been a momentary discovery of God's heart for the world and their role in God's mission, but that they would live a life in line with our calling as believers, whether through going, supporting, or mobilising others.

## 30 JAN • THURSDAY

Please pray for the Rwandan missionaries who are serving in different countries of Africa, as well as for Noblesse, who is still raising funds to go back and serve in South Sudan where he had served on the Laarim team. Pray that through their lives, many might come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

## 31 JAN • FRIDAY

Please pray for our AIM team in Rwanda, that God would give us wisdom as we make decisions about partnerships, activities, personnel, and the future of the NGO which we serve under.



## THE 3 D'S...

Our camp ministry is called 3d Christian Camps. The 3 'd's' stand for discover, decide and do it. We desire that the truths the youth discover about themselves, others and God during camp would lead them to make a personal decision for Christ, and that they would continue to live it out after they leave camp.



## 10 YEARS AND COUNTING...

Lord willing, this year the 10th Training Camp will take place. In addition, a number of Teens' Camps and a Pastors' Kids Camp will take place. Praise God for all those who have had the opportunity to hear the true gospel during these camps and for his faithfulness in providing staff, finances and a venue.

## GROWING LEADERS

In general, the volunteers of our camps are young adults who have themselves first participated in a Training Camp as a camper. Based on different elements that can for example include character, recommendation by their counsellor, and relationship with the Lord, we can ask them to come back as a volunteer on staff for a given camp. That's when they receive a certificate.



1-7 FEBRUARY  
**CHURCH PLANTING**



## THE DE LEEUWS

In 2016 Ard and Carin De Leeuw and their children joined a Focus Team serving among the Laarim. Following a home assignment in the Netherlands, the De Leeuws returned to South Sudan in 2019 to lead a new ministry team, continuing the work the Focus Team had begun.

## INTO THE LIGHT

How is the gospel making a difference to the Laarim? Carin De Leeuw shares some thoughts.

**T**he Laarim have been working hard in their garden plots, sowing and cultivating their crops. This year God has blessed the Laarim with very good rains and that means a good harvest. People are always hungry and a lot of them struggle with malnutrition but now, with the good harvest, happiness is beginning to come back to the eyes of the people. And then this happens...

We hear gunshots and different reports tell us that the Laarim are fighting with a neighbouring people group. In the space of a couple of weeks,



men, women and children die because of this fighting. Nobody remembers how it started any more, probably cattle raiding, but both groups take revenge on each other and it takes many lives.

This is Laarim life. Dark and sad. Life is hard. And there is also a spiritual battle going on.

*“...a couple of hundred people come together to hear and learn more from the Word of God.”*

Every week, in different places among the Laarim villages, a couple of hundred people come together to hear and learn more from the Word of God. Despite, or maybe because of, the hard life the Laarim face and the lack of hope, more and more people want to hear the gospel.

Sometimes it's hard for them to hear and obey the Word of God because the gospel challenges, and at times, is the opposite of accepted Laarim culture. But every week we see people giving their lives to Jesus. And we see God changing lives.

A neighbour decided to stop beating his wives and children (beating is normal among the Laarim). Teenage boys are deciding that it is wrong to rape girls (rape is common here). Young men are deciding to stop cattle raiding (cattle raiding proves your manhood). Believers are deciding to stop drinking alcohol (alcohol abuse is a big problem here). We see believers changing their behaviour and their interactions with the people around them in positive ways. A nine year old girl is leading different women to faith. A witchdoctor has left her old life behind and started to follow Jesus. A young illiterate woman leads a Bible study group every week where more than hundred men, women and children come to listen to the gospel.

The battle in the Laarim will continue. It's the darkness against the light. We see more light spots lighting up their communities. And we know, light has won. The light will overcome all of the darkness. 🌞

## WEEKENDFOCUS

### 1-2 FEBRUARY

Pray that Laarim believers will grow in faith and stand strong in Jesus. Pray they would respond to the Holy Spirit urging them to share the gospel, so that God's Word will be heard and obeyed among the Laarim.

#### 3 FEB • MONDAY

Pray for the health of our family and team. Currently we're experiencing many health challenges, and because we live in a remote area, medical assistance is harder to get. Even small health challenges can mean that we are less productive in ministry, so please pray for protection.

#### 4 FEB • TUESDAY

Pray for the relationships between team members. We are all from different cultures and have different approaches. Give thanks that we share the same goal and pray that we will work well to see this realised. Pray that our team would show the Laarim how the body of Christ works in action.

#### 5 FEB • WEDNESDAY

Pray for the development of short and long term discipleship programmes, that they would enable and equip the (illiterate) Laarim believers to spread the gospel and help new believers grow in their faith.

#### 6 FEB • THURSDAY

Pray for our relationships with the Laarim and Laarim leadership. Pray that God will open their hearts and that through our relationships we can spread the gospel effectively. Especially pray for the Laarim chiefs, that they will receive Christ, so that we can work together to bless the Laarim.

#### 7 FEB • FRIDAY

Pray for our team, that we will have a good balance between family life, ministry and personal time with God. Pray that we will stay healthy in body, mind and soul and that we can be a blessing for many people around us.





## **SOUTH SUDAN**

AIM's work in Sudan began in 1949. From the early days, we worked with African missionaries sent from DR Congo. Over the years though, civil wars and government restrictions created difficult conditions. From the 1950's until 2004, partial and full expulsions of missionaries alongside escalating violence meant that church planting activity was limited.

The outcome of the 2005 peace deal that ended Africa's longest-running civil war, was the establishment of South Sudan in 2011 as the world's newest country. According to the Joshua Project, 57% of the population identify themselves as Christians but there are still seven unreached people groups including the Laarim, the Didinga and the Lopit.

## **MOUNTAIN MISSION**

Across the valleys, along the plateaus and slopes, and on the adjacent plains of the Didinga hills in South Sudan lives a people group who are still waiting to hear the name of Jesus.

**P**rimarily focused on raising cattle but also crop farming, the Didinga people live in round houses with cone-shaped roofs, and each clan lives in a homestead together.

The Didinga accept the existence of a supreme being, but see this being as distant. They interact with many spirits who require worship and sacrifice. They also place great importance on the worship of dead ancestors, of whom they live in fear. The community rainmaker carries great influence and power and performs rituals to ensure the growth of their crops.

### **WHAT'S THE PLAN TO REACH THEM?**

Since 2006 AIM has sought to share the gospel with this group. Instability in the area has meant that previous teams have had to finish earlier than planned. However, now with a sustained period of peace, we would like to re-establish a team among the Didinga hills. Working with the Africa Inland Church of South Sudan, including a church in Chukudum (a lower lying town at the foot of the mountains), we long to see maturing churches planted on the mountains. 🏡





## BUILDING HIS CHURCH

**B**ased in the Torit district of South Sudan, the Lopit practice traditional agriculture, as well as rearing livestock. They also harvest forest products, such as honey and shea nuts. Traditionally they believe in a supreme god, with spirits interacting with their day to day lives. Worship celebrations are accompanied by dancing and drinking, and alcoholism is a problem among the Lopit. Their culture is transmitted through song, poetry, drama and music that express emotions.

An initial Training in Ministry Outreach (TIMO) team among the Lopit saw a fledgling Africa Inland Church congregation established in Lohutok village. Since then, the church has experienced spiritual and numerical growth, and outreach work has seen local congregations emerging in several other villages. A second team lived in these outlying villages between 2013 - 2015 and had the joy of seeing more Lopit turning to Christ. Team members have since returned to support the young church, but they need extra help.

Led by Kenyan missionaries Robert & Carol Bett, the team on the ground needs additional members to support the church in the southern area of the Lopit territory. The team's ministry will be centred around the goal of seeing self-sustaining churches in the south developing a passion to reach the surrounding villages that have no evangelical witness. The team will be involved in evangelism, as well as discipling local believers and training potential leaders so that they can plant churches in the unreached mountain areas. 📍

### WEEKENDFOCUS

#### 8-9 FEBRUARY

Pray to the Lord of the Harvest for more workers to go to South Sudan. There are currently seven people groups waiting for missionaries to tell them about Jesus. Pray that we would have the privilege of working with UK and African churches to send Christians to them.

#### 10 FEB • MONDAY

Pray for the churches among the Laarim and the Lopit to catch the vision of sharing the gospel with their communities. Pray that the good news of Jesus would be such a powerful transforming force in their lives that it would overcome historical differences.

#### 11 FEB • TUESDAY

Pray for missionaries coming from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, that they would work together well, displaying the body of Christ in action. As they work with local churches, pray that their unity in Christ would be an encouragement to both the church and the missionaries.

#### 12 FEB • WEDNESDAY

Pray for influential men and women within the Laarim, Didinga and Lopit communities to come to know Jesus. Pray particularly for local chiefs, rainmakers and witchdoctors to know the transforming power of God's grace.

#### 13 FEB • THURSDAY

Pray the political situation in South Sudan would remain stable so effective gospel ministry can continue. Pray for the government, regional leaders, and local chiefs, whose personal agendas affect the lives of so many, to seek after truth and pursue righteousness.

#### 14 FEB • FRIDAY

For the unreached people groups of South Sudan to come to know Christ, we all need to be involved. Will you pray about how you can play a part in them coming to know Jesus? Could you share about opportunities to serve in your church, or pray for them in your housegroups or prayer meetings?

### SEND ME...

Could you be a part of the work to reach the Laarim, Didinga or the Lopit with the gospel?



To find out more or chat to a mission advisor: [eu.aimint.org/southsudan](https://eu.aimint.org/southsudan)



15-21 FEBRUARY  
**TEACHING**



## MEET REBEKAH

Rebekah Saylor is a member of a Training in Ministry Outreach (TIMO) team among the Zigua in Tanzania. Part of the team's outreach to Komsanga village has been establishing a nursery and primary school. She shares, "Running a school is no small feat. There is obstacle after obstacle to overcome... But through it, we're seeing God at work."

## "GOD IS AT WORK HERE"

Our village leader, Mwenyekiti, is a force to be reckoned with. She is well respected in the village and is full of wisdom. She is also adamantly opposed to hearing about the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Many of the members of our team have shared the gospel with her countless times, but she usually responds with a polite, "Maybe another day" or, "That's great for you, but I'll stick with my religion." She has made it pretty clear that Jesus is not for her. Nonetheless, her youngest son and four of her grandchildren are students at our nursery, an openly Christian school. A few weeks back, Mwenyekiti mentioned that she was fairly certain her son was ready to profess Christ as his Saviour. We were thrilled to hear this, of course! The conversation went on and Mwenyekiti casually continued, "I expect this next generation to all be Christians because of the school. They won't be Muslim anymore." WHAT? Yes! Praise Jesus! This is our prayer.

In Bible class a few weeks ago, we took a couple of days to review the stories we had learned so far.





The children successfully recounted story after story from the Old Testament. It's an amazing thing to hear these children, who have grown up wearing charms to protect them from spirits and who often sleep through drumming and chanting around their homes at night, recount the story of God and his plan for a Saviour. Each morning they say the Lord's prayer together and share prayer requests from their homes, taking it in turns to pray for each other. They faithfully pray for their parents, that they would come to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

### **NOT JUST SCHOOL**

One of my favourite parts of this process is seeing how the things that they are learning in school spill over into the other areas of their lives. David insists that when guests visit his house they pray before eating. Grace says that sometimes she goes behind her house just to be alone and praise Jesus. The other day, two boys were overheard reciting John 3:16 to each other. One little guy prays for his dad each morning – and sometimes his dad will even remind him when he forgets!

Our desire is to see the gospel go forth in this village through this little school. We want to see the next generation of Zigua committed to Jesus Christ. Despite the obstacles, we believe God is at work here. He is on the move, and we are so ready to see what he will do! 🙏

## **WEEKENDFOCUS**

### **15-16 FEBRUARY**

Rejoice with us over new Zigua believers! Two women have come to Christ. Please pray for them, that they would stand firm in the faith. Pray for us as a team, as we learn how to disciple them well.

### **17 FEB • MONDAY**

Pray for our village leader, that God would reveal himself to her. It is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that she will come to saving faith in Christ. She is dearly loved, and we want her to know the joy and freedom that Christ has to offer.

### **18 FEB • TUESDAY**

Pray for wisdom in the ongoing development of the school that the team has established in Komsanga. There are many obstacles to overcome, and they will only be overcome by the grace of God. Pray for us as we seek God's will for the future of Nuru Pre and Primary School.

### **19 FEB • WEDNESDAY**

Pray for the students of Nuru Pre and Primary School – that they will continue to learn well, that Christ would change their lives from the inside out, and that they would grow to become gospel witnesses in their own communities.

### **20 FEB • THURSDAY**

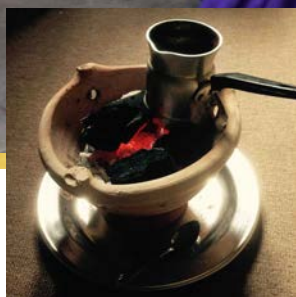
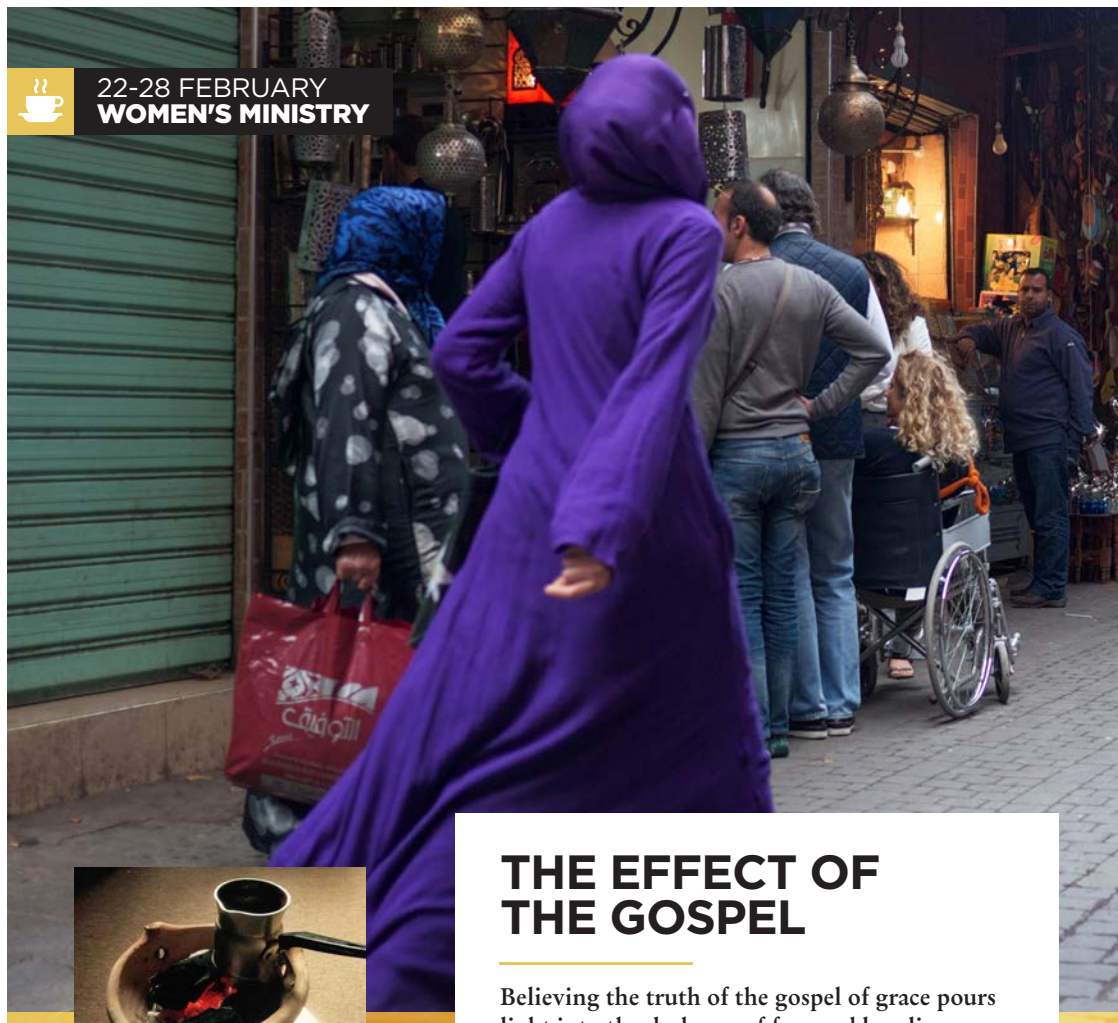
Please pray for the families of Komsanga village and the surrounding areas. Pray that they would know Jesus for who he really is. Pray that they would have the boldness to leave behind the false religions that they have grown up knowing and that Satan would not have a hold on them.

### **21 FEB • FRIDAY**

Pray for our team as we begin to wrap up this term. With only six months left, we are trying to end well while also seeking God's direction for the future. Pray that we would be good stewards of our time and that we would listen to his voice.



22-28 FEBRUARY  
**WOMEN'S MINISTRY**



## COULD YOU...?

We call areas where missionary work is not welcome, 'creative access'. This is because to serve there, workers also need to have a 'normal' job and find creative ways to share the gospel.

We're currently looking for team members to serve in North Africa:



[eu.aimint.org/creativeaccess](http://eu.aimint.org/creativeaccess)

## THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL

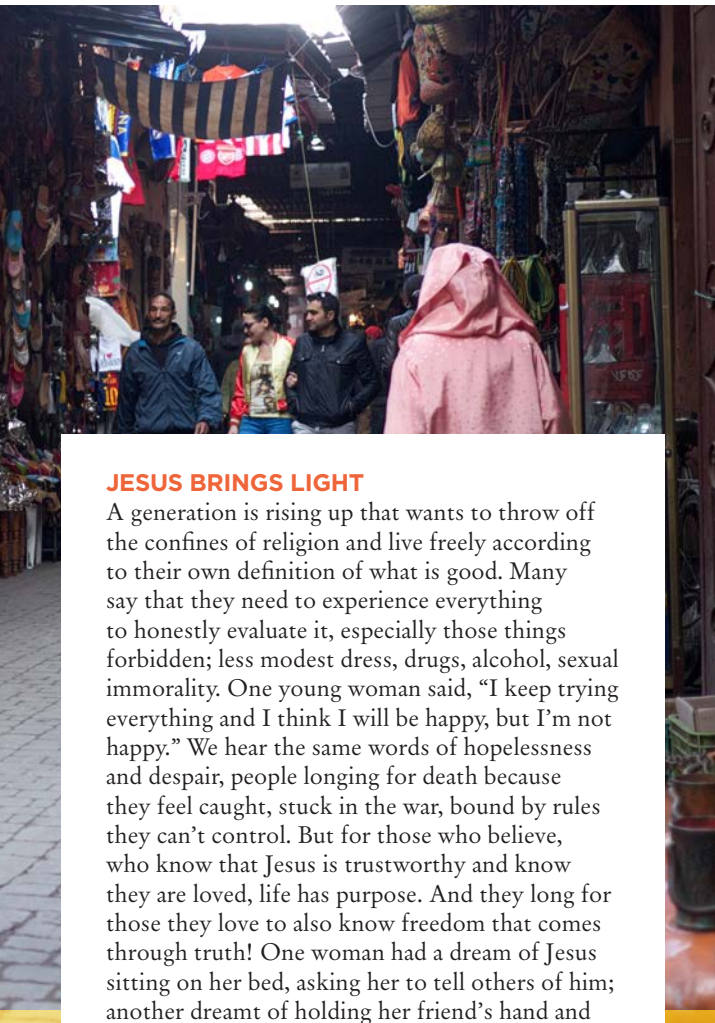
Believing the truth of the gospel of grace pours light into the darkness of fear and loneliness, gives hope to those crushed by sickness, and purpose to those in despair.

**O**ne young girl learnt songs about Jesus from a TV channel. She went to bed at night afraid that she was going to go to hell because she loved Jesus.

She would beg God in her prayers to forgive her for loving Jesus, and in response, Jesus came to her, smiling, in her dreams. Her fears were swept away and she was overwhelmed with peace and joy.

An older woman, crippled with arthritis, called on the name of Jesus for healing and he graciously healed her! Another woman called out to Jesus for healing after years spent in hospital, and when Jesus healed her immediately and completely, she believed. Her parents and other family members also believed, unable to deny the miracle before them.





## JESUS BRINGS LIGHT

A generation is rising up that wants to throw off the confines of religion and live freely according to their own definition of what is good. Many say that they need to experience everything to honestly evaluate it, especially those things forbidden; less modest dress, drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality. One young woman said, “I keep trying everything and I think I will be happy, but I’m not happy.” We hear the same words of hopelessness and despair, people longing for death because they feel caught, stuck in the war, bound by rules they can’t control. But for those who believe, who know that Jesus is trustworthy and know they are loved, life has purpose. And they long for those they love to also know freedom that comes through truth! One woman had a dream of Jesus sitting on her bed, asking her to tell others of him; another dreamt of holding her friend’s hand and bringing her to Jesus. She is an evangelist, telling friend after friend the gospel!

Jesus brings light, healing and purpose, but wounded ones still cry out for healing; the battle is fierce in the unseen. Fear still shouts to new believers that they cannot tell others of their faith or they will die, and many stay silent for years believing the lie that they are alone. Doubt paralyses those who believe that suffering means that Jesus doesn’t care, or at least doesn’t care enough to intervene. Old sins rise up and entangle the weary. People are sinned against, abused, blamed, and try to make sense of why the wicked prosper. Ask for faith for each believer to remember that God has conquered; the wicked will be judged. God waits because he longs for their repentance. He pours light into fragile clay jars and holds healing hearts so that his children can declare the beauty of Jesus until he comes. 🌍

## WEEKENDFOCUS

**22-23 FEBRUARY**

Lord Jesus, thank you that you reveal yourself to us through your Holy Spirit, through your Word, through your prophets, through dreams, through your people. May those that hear your gospel not reject your grace. May they believe and obey Jesus Christ, our Lord.

### 24 FEB • MONDAY

Holy Spirit, please comfort the broken hearted, those who have been oppressed or abused, those who feel trapped. May they know that you see them, that they are precious, created in the image of God. May they receive the love Jesus poured out at the cross for their forgiveness and redemption.

### 25 FEB • TUESDAY

Mighty loving Father, to those who believe, you give the right to be called children of God! How great is your love! For all those fighting for rights and freedom, may they recognise the emptiness of temporal rights and the inexpressible beauty of the right to be called the children of God. May they believe.

### 26 FEB • WEDNESDAY

Lord Jesus, you said that you will build your church. We believe you. Please give courage to new believers. May they know how and when to share their faith. May fear not keep them from meeting other believers. May they not immediately plan to leave the country.

### 27 FEB • THURSDAY

May the believers never lose their first love. May each one abide deeply in Jesus, treasure his Word, believe and obey the gospel daily. May they forgive quickly and love deeply and live in grace and holiness.

### 28 FEB • FRIDAY

As the battle rages, may each believer be delivered from the schemes of the enemy by the power of the Holy Spirit. May they put on the full armour of God and stand firm.



## WANT TO HELP?

Do you read the articles here with a longing to get involved? Perhaps as you read of the needs in Africa, you think, "If only my family were at a stage where we could go..." or "If only my health allowed..." There can be many reasons why we can't go Africa (though there is also never a perfect time to go). But as well as serving overseas, there are many ways to get involved in mission. Currently we're looking for people to partner with us financially. To sustain Tim's work, and the other vital functions of our home office, we need to see an increase in giving to our general fund. Your contribution would mean that those who can go to Africa would continue to get the best support and guidance that we can offer.

To donate visit [eu.aimint.org/give](http://eu.aimint.org/give), or contact our Nottingham office on **0115 9838120**.

For prayer information from the Nottingham office, download our prayer letter available at: [eu.aimint.org/officeprayer](http://eu.aimint.org/officeprayer).

## LIFE IN AFRICA

Tim, one of our mission advisors, tells us about his first mission trip to Africa.

My first experience of AIM was as a fresh-faced 21-year-old volunteer teacher in western Kenya. Kenya grabbed my heart – the adventure, the stark reality of life in Africa and the desperate need for Jesus. I returned to the UK and realised I needed further training, so I spent two years at All Nations Christian College, where I met my wife, Bronwen. We then spent a few years trying to work out where the Lord was calling us to. We visited Mozambique for two weeks, and were impacted by a short weekend up in the north of the country; we saw the desperate need for gospel workers among the Mwani people (a Muslim unreached people group). The next ten years we were involved in church planting among the Mwani before returning to the UK in 2015. I then became AIM's mission advisor in the south of England and Wales.

One of the most challenging things about following Jesus is that he wants our everything. Not a quarter or a half – everything. Just as Christ gave his all for us, so, out of deep gratitude, we in turn give our all for him. One of the great things about my job as a mission advisor is that I get to regularly meet up and have a Coke with people enquiring about serving the Lord in Africa. As we talk, I'm constantly challenged by the very real cost of serving him that each person must wrestle with. Just recently, I spoke with an enquirer for whom going to Africa will not only mean missing his family, friends and church, but the hardest thing for him is the fact that he will need to give up his job; a job that is very precious to him. ➔





## BEHIND THE SCENES WITH TIM

While Africa is a continent of vast need and grinding poverty, one of the things that is most important for people considering serving the Lord there is not professional experience (although that's good), or language ability (also good), instead it's having a heart that beats for the Lord Jesus. When I meet someone and recognise this person is passionately in love with the Lord Jesus – that's when I get excited. The people AIM sends to Africa, whatever they do, whoever they are, they must be head over heels in love with Jesus. The needs of Africa are so great that in a real sense, only God can sort them out! True transformation only ever comes when the human heart is transformed, and only Jesus Christ can do that.

I love journeying alongside enquirers as they consider how the Lord is leading them. My aim is to use the experience I have of working with AIM in Africa to encourage, advise and envision enquirers. I am grateful to be a part of an organisation that seeks to support and encourage its workers in so many different ways; providing pastoral support while in the UK and on the field in Africa, pre-assignment assessments, advice and encouragement in support raising, administrative support (pension and tax support) through to strategic, and practical support when they are in Africa. If you ever consider serving in Africa, I'd love to have a Coke with you! 🍹

If you would like to meet up with a mission advisor to discuss your calling to mission, or what opportunities to serve in Africa are available, Debbie, our Mobilisation Coordinator, will put you in touch with the advisor nearest to you.



Contact Debbie: [mobcoord.eu@aimint.org](mailto:mobcoord.eu@aimint.org) or 0115 9838130

### WEEKENDFOCUS

29 FEBRUARY -  
1 MARCH

Pray for our mission advisors as they speak to people enquiring about serving with AIM in Africa and Europe. Pray that they would have wisdom and would be open to the Holy Spirit's leading as they interact with each person.

#### 2 MAR • MONDAY

Please pray for the church in the UK that we would all sense the urgency of praying for those who have yet to hear about Jesus. Pray that our mission advisors would have more opportunities to partner with churches to highlight the needs in Africa.

#### 3 MAR • TUESDAY

Pray for AIM's mission advisors as they speak to students at Christian Unions and Bible colleges. Pray that the Lord would help students and young people to see that concern for the lost outside of the UK is central to following Christ.

#### 4 MAR • WEDNESDAY

Pray for wisdom for AIM's mobilisation team as we continue to develop and plan our work this year. Pray that we would have sensitivity to the Lord's leading and creativity, and will work effectively as a team to see God's mission plan come to fruition.

#### 5 MAR • THURSDAY

Pray to the Lord of the Harvest to send out his workers into the harvest field. Pray with us for ten new long term enquirers to contact AIM over the next few months. Pray that new enquirers would not only encourage the office team but also encourage those on the field who are waiting for support.

#### 6 MAR • FRIDAY

Pray for us as we work with other similar agencies in the UK. Pray that together we will help the church understand the huge need to reach unreached people groups. Pray especially for the events surrounding the Logos boat docking in the UK this summer, pray that many would catch the vision for mission.



7-13 MARCH  
**OUTREACH 8** SM



## SWAHILI PEOPLE

In January 2018 a new team began serving among the Swahili speaking people along the coast of southern Tanzania. Despite considerable efforts over the last 120 years to share the good news with these mainly Muslim peoples, there are only a handful of indigenous believers. In fact, many in this area are openly resistant to the gospel message.

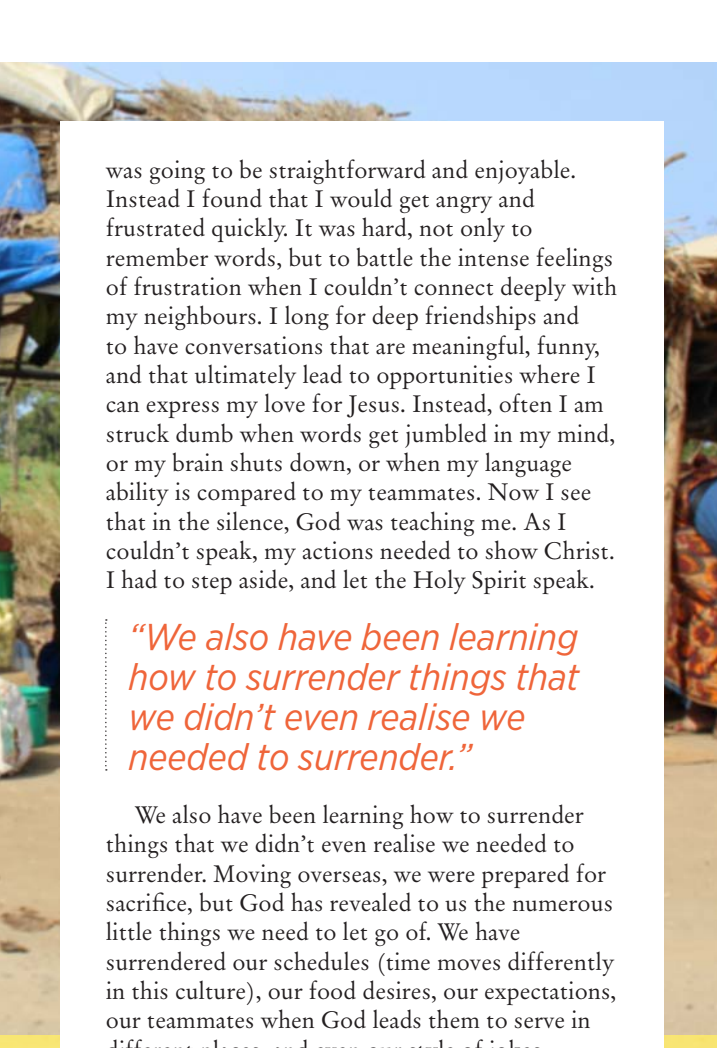
## CHANGE AND BEING CHANGED

Living a similar lifestyle to their community, the team have spent a year learning Swahili and developing friendships where team members can discuss faith. Now, the team plans to begin educational ministries like teaching English, conservation agriculture and well drilling. Erin Hawkinson shares about their experiences so far.

**T**his year has been one of the hardest I've faced, but through it I've seen God at work both among the Swahili people and personally, as he sanctifies me.

I have wanted to learn Swahili since I was a little girl and so, I thought that learning language





was going to be straightforward and enjoyable. Instead I found that I would get angry and frustrated quickly. It was hard, not only to remember words, but to battle the intense feelings of frustration when I couldn't connect deeply with my neighbours. I long for deep friendships and to have conversations that are meaningful, funny, and that ultimately lead to opportunities where I can express my love for Jesus. Instead, often I am struck dumb when words get jumbled in my mind, or my brain shuts down, or when my language ability is compared to my teammates. Now I see that in the silence, God was teaching me. As I couldn't speak, my actions needed to show Christ. I had to step aside, and let the Holy Spirit speak.

*"We also have been learning how to surrender things that we didn't even realise we needed to surrender."*

We also have been learning how to surrender things that we didn't even realise we needed to surrender. Moving overseas, we were prepared for sacrifice, but God has revealed to us the numerous little things we need to let go of. We have surrendered our schedules (time moves differently in this culture), our food desires, our expectations, our teammates when God leads them to serve in different places, and even our style of jokes.

### **TURNING TO CHRIST**

Not only is God at work in the lives of the team, but he's also changing hearts among the Swahili people. A few years ago, this area resisted gospel workers living among them. Now, we have permission to open a community centre, and to hold outreach events. We've been given permission to buy land for a church in one of the villages, and to establish a new team in another place. People are turning to Christ. We have started discovery Bible studies with neighbours, and local believers are seeing the importance of sharing Christ. We have even had a family move out to one of the villages to encourage and teach the believers there and share Christ with the non-believers. All these wonderful things are happening not because of us, but God softening and preparing the hearts of many and we get the privilege to see the fruit of his work. 🌍

## **WEEKENDFOCUS**

### **7-8 MARCH**

Please pray that the Swahili people on the south coast of Tanzania would be open to receiving the gospel. Pray that they would come to know Christ as their personal saviour, have a deep relationship with him, and a desire to share Christ. Pray for strong faith during persecution.

### **9 MAR • MONDAY**

Our team is welcoming new members soon. Pray for the new members as they say goodbye to family at home and transition to life on the coast. Pray that our team would welcome them well, be helpful as they adjust to life here, and that our team dynamic would be healthy and strong.

### **10 MAR • TUESDAY**

Please pray for the team's transition into ministry focus instead of mainly focusing on language acquisition. Pray that we would continually seek God for what he wants us to do, and how we can use our giftings and passions to serve him and the people here.

### **11 MAR • WEDNESDAY**

Please pray for our language skills - we continually need prayer for learning and perseverance. We will always be learning, but we want to start engaging with our neighbours on a deeper level and we need the strength of the Holy Spirit, and to better understand our neighbours.

### **12 MAR • THURSDAY**

Pray for our neighbours attending discovery Bible studies. Pray that as they are learning how to study the Bible they will seek Christ in Scripture, and begin to share what they learn with their families and friends.

### **13 MAR • FRIDAY**

There are early plans to start a new Training in Ministry Outreach (TIMO) team in a nearby village. Pray that God would touch people's hearts for the Swahili people of the south coast and that team leaders would step forward to lead this team.



## CREATED IN GOD'S IMAGE

Lois Ooms worked closely with AIM and the Africa Inland Church (AIC) in Kenya for 39 years. For ten years she lived at Litein Hospital and was the Director of Community Development for AIC Kenya. She then spent eight years supporting AIM missionaries across Africa, leading workshops in transformational development. Now she is retired, but continues the challenge of adapting the principles to the North American context.

**G**od moves in mysterious ways. A young national pastor felt the Lord's call to the unreached people groups of the East African coast. He walked from place to place encouraging small groups of believers. He was sometimes robbed and beaten, and he spent many nights hiding in the bush. Nevertheless, he returned with a desire to reach the unreached people. Enemies burned the guesthouse where he usually stayed but, in God's

providence, that night he was delayed and was not there. After laying low for a few months, he returned and slowly began talking with the people again, but this time he discussed how they could begin small businesses to improve their living conditions. They welcomed him and his colleagues to lead a seminar on microfinance.

*"...he spent many nights hiding in the bush. Nevertheless, he returned with a desire to reach the unreached people."*

He talked about how they were created in God's image with dignity, choice, and the ability to take control of their circumstances. By the second day a few said they had never heard such words. They openly asked forgiveness for not treating their wives as image bearers of God. By the end of the week, 80 people, both men and women, stood up and acknowledged that their traditional gods had deceived them. They then said, "Pastor, tomorrow we will build a small shelter. We want you to return on Sunday to begin a church and tell us more about this God and Jesus."



*“When I see someone caught in the darkness of sin, what do I see—the remnants of the image of God or all the negative effects of sin?”*

That was nearly three years ago. Today there are three churches among that people group. Furthermore, the leaders have asked him to find additional pastors like himself, so they can go into more remote areas to share about this God who gives people dignity.

Let's move to a blighted community in Gary, Indiana. It has gangs, drugs, no schools, and no businesses, yet there are three churches united in Christ to bring change to the community. Talking with the community, their priority was to rehabilitate the baseball field, so their children had a safe place to play. A suburban church worked with the local churches. Many from the community came to volunteer their skills—I can fix the fence; we can help you paint; we can repair the swing. That was four years ago. The churches are growing. At the first community clean up day they collected five tons of rubbish and a dump

truck full of old tyres. The mayor took note of the community initiative and helped to repair streets, remove snow, and tear down abandoned houses. Last year they celebrated by planning a community festival with their own resources. Then on Sunday at a combined worship service in the park, they praised the Lord for how he is transforming their community. The mayor attended and thanked the churches for giving holistic leadership in the community.

Everyone has a place in the church. The woman whose daughter was killed by her granddaughter is there praying with those who are grieving and traumatised. At the trial she didn't ask for a reduced sentence but asked that there would be a Christian counsellor available to talk with her granddaughter in prison. Two local men are proud to wash the dishes at church functions. A mentally challenged young man helps the elderly carry their food to the table.

The Spirit works in mysterious ways. It begins with our attitude. When I see someone caught in the darkness of sin, what do I see—the remnants of the image of God or all the negative effects of sin? Then it works itself out in mercy—compassion that acts. After all, isn't this what God demonstrated through the incarnation? 🌍





14-20 MARCH  
HEALTHCARE

## CHANNELS OF HOPE

When I started working in the Aids Awareness Programme in 2002, Aids was a taboo. Nobody talked about it, and people who tested positive hid their test results from others. People discriminated against those with the disease and even stigmatised them. When it became known that someone was HIV positive, they would be fired from their job without a second thought. When I was still living in Aru, I was the only person who raised the issue that people could become infected through sexual relationships. I managed to get one opportunity to speak on the church radio station about the dangers of having sexual intercourse without knowing your partner's HIV status.

With the arrival of antiretroviral drugs (ARV) that keep HIV under control, things started to change. However, ARV were not available in DR Congo, so people had to travel to Uganda to obtain them. After a training course, given by the National Aids Programme of Congo in Adi in 2014, people were finally able to receive their treatment at Adi hospital. This




### ANNEMARIE BOKS

Annemarie Boks works in DR Congo as a Director of an Aids Awareness Programme established by the CECA 20 (Communauté Evangélique au Centre de l'Afrique) church.

*Please note: Funds donated to Channels of Hope and for school funds will be administered through the Aids Awareness Programme.*







was not without problems. As the hospital was not on all the official lists as licenced to dispense ARV, sometimes they didn't receive any stock and people couldn't receive their drugs. However, people were starting to open up about their status.

### **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES**

In 2013 I attended a Channels of Hope workshop in South Africa. Primarily for church leaders, the workshop is based on biblical principles and focuses on giving hope to those living with HIV (1 Peter 1:3). It seeks to empower church leaders with the appropriate attitudes, knowledge and skills to assist faith communities in their journeys to HIV understanding and competence.

We have now begun this teaching programme in

DR Congo. The workshop teaches church leaders that they are also vulnerable to infection and that their hope is in the resurrection of Christ. They learn together about how HIV is transmitted, and how it can be prevented. We include a testimony from someone living with HIV and end with examining seven areas of competence in which the church can grow in relation to HIV. The participants talk through the biblical principles of these competences, and discuss how the church is doing at the moment. Then the church leaders describe ways to improve their strengths and work on their weaknesses.

### **CHANGED LIVES**

Recently one of the participants of a workshop held not long ago came to see me in Adi. As a school chaplain he had shared about the workshop at his school. When he talked about HIV testing, his students expressed their willingness to have a test and know their status. We are discussing now what the possibilities are to visit the school, have a teaching session with all the students and then do HIV testing. Pray as more people engage with the workshops, not only that the Aids information would impact their lives, but that they would recognise the power of the gospel to change lives and attitudes. 🙏

## **WEEKENDFOCUS**

### **14-15 MARCH**

Give thanks for all that the Lord has done this past year through the Channels of Hope workshops and teaching sessions. Pray that the workshops organised for 2020 will impact lives in such a way that they go on to impact others.

### **16 MARCH • MONDAY**

Please pray that financial support will be given towards the organisation of the Channels of Hope workshops. The Aids Awareness Programme is responsible for covering the costs of the syllabus, teaching materials, transport, administration, media presentations and participants' meals.

### **17 MARCH • TUESDAY**

The Aids Awareness Programme is currently supporting 29 orphans through school, all who lost their parents to Aids. Pray that money will be given towards their schooling. Pray particularly for the four girls who will sit school finals in May.

### **18 MARCH • WEDNESDAY**

Annemarie works together with the hospital to develop treatment programmes for people living with HIV. Give thanks that this programme has been financed for 14 months. Pray for more financial support, mainly to buy special medicines for opportunistic infections, nutritional aid and home visits.

### **19 MARCH • THURSDAY**

Every Thursday Annemarie is involved in testing and supporting pregnant women with HIV when they come for antenatal care. Pray for wisdom when counselling them and also as she talks with teenage girls who are pregnant. Pray for plans for school outreach designed to help prevent teenage pregnancies.

### **20 MARCH • FRIDAY**

The Ebola epidemic in the south of DR Congo (North Kivu Province and the south of Ituri) seems to be slowing down. Pray that it will soon come to an end. The dry season has meant that travelling has been easier but as we approach the rainy season, pray for those dealing with difficult conditions.



21-31 MARCH  
**CHILDREN & YOUTH**



## FINDING THE LOST

**“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.” Isaiah 58:12**

**T**rafficked as a child, growing up on the streets. Abused, neglected, cold and frightened. That is the reality for many of the young people that Dwelling Places (a Christian NGO) works with in Uganda. A large majority of the children on the streets of Kampala are from the under-developed region of Karamoja in the northeast of Uganda. The Karimojong are a people struggling with poverty, caught up

in a circle of violence with their neighbours and holding onto animistic beliefs from their nilotic history that sees them glorifying cattle. Their children arrive in Kampala not just geographically lost and hurting emotionally, but also with a mix of spiritual ideas and a sense of identity that values Karamoja’s aggressive past.

So how do we reach into these young people’s lives with the gospel? We sit with them. On the pavements of Kampala, we sit and get to know them. We share about our own lives, and our reason for working at Dwelling Places. We tell them that we are not just nurses or teachers, that we are Christians and that in Christ, we have found our identity. In our lostness, he found us, and he has found them too. 🙏



## WEEKENDFOCUS

**21-22 MARCH**

Give thanks for the gifts that God has given to Marsali Campbell and her willingness to serve at Dwelling Places in Kampala, Uganda, since 2001. Praise God for the staff team at Dwelling Places who help numerous children and young people and who introduce them to Jesus.

### 23 MARCH • MONDAY

Marsali spent much of 2019 on extended medical leave in the UK as she sought to manage a chronic pain problem with her shoulder. Give thanks for the medical teams in the UK who have helped her to manage pain and provided physiotherapy.

### 24 MARCH • TUESDAY

Please continue to pray for full healing for Marsali. Pray that she would be able to manage the activities that trigger pain, avoiding them where possible, and taking extra rest when she needs it.

### 25 MARCH • WEDNESDAY

Pray for Marsali's family as they adjust to her being back in Africa. Pray particularly for her mum as parting each time gets more difficult. Pray for Marsali too, that she would know God's comfort, and his clear calling on her life as she balances the desire to help care for her mum and to serve in Uganda.

### 26 MARCH • THURSDAY

Give thanks for the staff team at Dwelling Places who have been ably continuing the work of rescue, rehabilitation, restoration and rebuilding of the children and young people that they come into contact with. Pray for a spirit of unity among the team, that together they may grow to be more Christlike.

### 27 MARCH • FRIDAY

Pray for the Karimojong people living in extreme poverty and having limited access to the gospel. Give thanks for Paul & Helen Shepherd, Caroline Bell and

many other missionaries from AIM and other agencies seeking to share the gospel in Karamoja.

## WEEKENDFOCUS

**28-29 MARCH**

Pray for the street children of Uganda still awaiting a way out. Pray that despite the difficult circumstances they find themselves in, they might know God's care and protection, his love and grace. Pray for those families whom Dwelling Places is working to help restore; may they know God's sustaining power.

### 30 MARCH • MONDAY

As well as her responsibilities at Dwelling Places, Marsali also serves as part of AIM's Child Safety Team, led by Cath Swanson. Pray for her role in this, often she is a first point of contact for missionaries and children with concerns. Pray that she would handle queries with wisdom, insight and sensitivity.

### 31 MARCH • TUESDAY

Give thanks for all that Marsali has learnt from the children and young people that she has worked among. From their resilience and joy, to the way that she has seen God working in and through their lives. Pray that she would continue to feel privileged to be a part of their stories of faith.

## OPENING EYES

**"I never knew that people could see to the other side of the street," Emma's smile lit up the room as she gazed through the thick lenses the optician had given her.**

This was her first eye test, aged 11. Her mother lived on the street, and so did she. Already largely responsible for caring for younger siblings, Emma's life as a young girl on the streets was getting more dangerous as she got older.

When we met her, not only were we able to provide shelter, care and protection, food, clothing, and get her eyes tested, we were able to share with her about Jesus. Her love for the Lord grew as she grew, and her passion for learning extended not only to academia but about her God. At university, despite struggling to fund her studies and living in a tiny room, she held regular Bible studies and prayer groups. Today, the legacy of Dwelling Places staff rescuing this young girl off the streets extends to Emma's children, now adults themselves, continuing to share about the God they love.



# GO & SERVE

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### About AIM Europe

Africa Inland Mission is a Christian mission sending agency. We have our roots in a small band of faithful men and women who, in 1895, followed God's call to venture inland to reach Africans untouched by the gospel. Their vision set the course of AIM for 120 years, as a community called and sent to live and minister among Africa's least-reached peoples. A call that still remains.

### If you'd like to speak to someone about mission, contact us at:

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