

# CONNECT

*AIM's journal for prayer, reflection and growth*



Does God's call for us to go to all nations still remain?  
Discover how that call looks different today.



**AFRICA**  
INLAND MISSION





# PIONEERS AND PLANS

In those famous verses in Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus tells us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. In this issue of Connect we consider the remaining task: the parts of the Earth still unreached with the good news of Christ's salvation and the role that both Westerners and Africans have to play in taking the gospel to those who have yet to hear it. Kola Kehinde is an AIM Europe Board member and also serves as the UK Coordinator for Calvary Ministries (Capro). Here he sets the context for this magazine, gives us an insight into the African church, and provides a challenge for future ministry.

Much appreciation must be given to the marvellous work done over the centuries by Western missionaries to ensure what we have in the African church today. Their engagement raised many churches as well as very seasoned pastors, elders, and other labourers within the local churches.

However, many of the churches became inward looking as age-old denominational 'differences' became ingrained in each planted work. Compounding this is the destruction of trust, sown by slave traders among [and between] most African cultures whilst the slave trade lasted, and when the race for African resources by the West thrived. This muddied the evangelism plane for the nascent African church, as they struggled to find identity in the aftermath of these forces.

The church has also been tremendously limited by the lack of trust (from Western missionaries) to allow them to oversee their own churches, their peoples' evangelisation and develop a local mission theology to drive their kingdom engagements. Steef Van't Slot who served as a missionary with Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ (WEC) puts it very frankly: "The early missionaries did a great job in evangelism and church planting but failed to transfer the missionary sending vision. We thought we would be missionaries for another 100 years and never thought of the possibilities that Black people could become missionaries." (Steef Van't Slot, Occupy, Capro Publication). ➔

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*If you would like to receive our weekly prayer email with seven daily prayer points, designed to provide you with up to date prayer and praise items, you can sign up at: [eu.aimint.org/pray](https://eu.aimint.org/pray).*

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## 📍 GROWTH OF INDIGENOUS MISSIONS

In the last 50 to 60 years however, a movement of African indigenous missions was raised by Western missionaries, willing to enable the African church to engage terrain by themselves. One such ‘radical’ missionary who has rightly been tagged ‘The Father of Indigenous African Missions’ was Sydney Graham Elton, popularly called Pa Elton. Completely yielded to the Holy Spirit and with an unusual understanding of God’s heart for areas unreached with the gospel, he saw Africans as the best missionaries to send among their own people.

Pa Elton sounded the mission trumpet on the university campuses, teaching and mobilising young Nigerians from the south to move to the north. He made it clear that the responsibility for evangelising Nigeria through missionary effort had been passed to Nigerians. He wrote: “In the past, it was the overseas missionary societies who found both the personnel and the money to evangelise Nigeria and we are reaping today what they sowed. We are grateful for their sacrifice in bringing us the wonderful gospel. But that is now changing; ‘the day of the white missionary’ is finished. God is

changing that pattern and he is now putting the responsibility for taking that same gospel to the lost in our own country (Nigeria) on the heads of every Nigerian Christian. In accepting the blessing of salvation, we (Nigerians) make ourselves debtors to all men too.” This statement was revolutionary. Structure was deliberately put in place to impart the missionary vision to these young Africans.

One result of this clear clarion call is Calvary Ministries (Capro) which has pioneered an indigenous missionary movement from Africa to the world. Today, Capro works in 36 different countries reaching out to at least 117 previously unreached people groups, with about 800 missionaries on all five continents of our world.

## THE CHALLENGE OF MISSION

Many though, in African churches, are conditioned to life in the local church with little to do beyond that context. Thus, they find God’s calling beyond the local environment very onerous and strange. The preparation becomes more difficult than it ought to be, especially where the ‘health and wealth gospel’ has added another layer of resistance. Who wants to venture out into the





midst of difficult terrain, running with the ‘horsemen’, when he can ‘enjoy’ the proceeds of ‘prosperity’ in the land of peace? It takes a long time to develop true discipleship (a precursor to mission service in all its true ramifications) and once discipleship is in place, it must be tested first (in direct obedience to Matthew 28:18-20) in local evangelism. Evangelism must become a way of life before it can be done away from home. Next comes cross-cultural training, then mission experience in a more familiar setting, before being able to operate with a new team in the frontier.

Even though this is arduous and time-consuming, it is better in the long run as learning and adapting to a culture akin to yours is easier than bridging a totally distant culture.

### **WESTERN AND AFRICAN MISSIONARY SYNERGY**

Our seemingly big churches, as many allude to in the West, do not always translate into the ability to reach the unreached in all contexts in Africa. The local church has local issues to focus on. Mission, many a time, comes last in the thoughts of administrators in the face of varied contesting needs within the local

context. It becomes easier to train people to set up another flagship of the denomination where it can be seen in the city, rather than planting a church in a place so hidden away. Sometimes money spent on distant missionaries is seen as a waste or loss to the denomination. We need to deliberately budget and plan for mission outreach on a par with our plans for the local church. Much of the support now from the West should be logistical in nature to enable outreach.

If Africa still needs Western missionaries, it’s not because Africans cannot do it on their own – Africans are pioneering ministry without Western involvement. The main idea now is synergy. What a force we can be together to impact churches in Africa and churches in the West! The African churches can release missionaries for on-the-ground involvement on the home front and even in the West. At home, they have the language and culture for direct immediate engagement. Any mistrust that has built over time can be dealt with by true discipleship training that touches the heart (and not just the head) culminating in practical life change.

### **KOLA KEHINDE**

*Capro’s UK Coordinator | AIM Board Member*

# UNDERSTANDING THE TASK



## WHAT IS A PEOPLE GROUP?

A significantly large group of individuals who perceive themselves to have an affinity based on a common linguistic, ethnic or geographic identity. We would also define this as the largest ethno-linguistic grouping in which the gospel could spread through 'normal' social networks.



## WHAT IS AN 'UNREACHED' PEOPLE GROUP?

An identifiable people group in which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelise their people. Missiologists have determined this to be less than 2% of the total people. However, there is a lot of debate around this term and the strict definitions given.

## WHAT IS AIM DOING?

Our priority is to go to groups where people are living and dying without ever fully getting to hear about Jesus and what he has done for them. For ease of reference, we refer to these groups as unreached people groups and broadly use the definition given above. In Africa there remain just under 1,000 groups without access to the gospel, around 380 million people. Many of these are adherents of other world religions, with the two largest groups located in Islamic North Africa.





# SHOULD WE GO?

The UK is now a multicultural, varied place and, despite our heritage, ‘post-Christian’; the number of followers of Christ seems at an all-time low. The rest of the world has changed too; the centre of gravity of the global church is no longer in Europe or North America but the southern hemisphere. In this context, is there still a place for the British/Western church to send gospel workers abroad?

While the number of church attendees in the UK has decreased over the last eighty years, the UK still has many churches, full-time church workers, and access to the gospel. We might feel like the church here is struggling, but in reality we have lots of resources and plenty of scope to be generous. There are many other peoples around the world with almost no access to the good news. We clearly see God’s heart for the whole world in Scripture. Matthew 28:18-20 is well-known as the ‘Great Commission’. However, there are plenty of other passages, including Matthew 24:14, Acts 1:8 and Psalm 67, which demonstrate God’s desire that we not only share the gospel with our neighbours, colleagues and friends, but consider those people that we can’t see, over the horizon and across the world too.

*“How are you balancing your time, energy and money...?”*

As you reflect on God’s call to global mission, how do you see that command worked out in your own life, and in your church? How are you balancing your time, energy and money between local evangelism and reaching those who currently have no opportunity to hear the gospel? Perhaps you could take this opportunity to think in particular about how you can best use your resources. To consider the ways in which you could give to mission visit: [eu.aimint.org/give](http://eu.aimint.org/give).

**Throughout this journal we talk about unreached people groups. I wonder if we sometimes imagine unreached people groups on a desert island, or in the middle of the Amazon rainforest? The reality is that the greatest concentration of people who have never heard the gospel are to be found among people of other religions.**



**Getting started:** If missionaries didn’t go to unreached people groups, what do you think would be their eternal destiny? What do you think determines whether we go to heaven?



**Read Genesis 3:1-7.** What was going on in the garden between God and Adam and Eve? How would you define sin from Genesis 3? Was it just Adam and Eve that now had a problem? What effect did this have on humankind?

**Now read Romans 6:23.** What does the Bible say is the result of sin in our lives?

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**Bringing it home:** Read and reflect on John 3:18 and Romans 6:23-24. These verses use a lot of stark language to describe the destination of those who don’t accept Jesus. How does this make you feel? How might this affect the way you pray?

Why not explore our free Bible study series: [eu.aimint.org/resources](http://eu.aimint.org/resources).







# HOW HAS GOD LED YOU?

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**Ann has been a missionary for 33 years. She explains how God has led her, over the years, to where she is now.**

Reading *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ronald Sider at university convicted me strongly that I should use my skills as a doctor to help those in need in Africa. I wasn't confident of much more than that, and so I only signed up for two years at Kapsowar Hospital in Kenya from 1988. After two years I was sure I should stay, and after four years I decided to go to All Nations Christian College (ANCC) for mission training before returning to Kapsowar.

I wasn't confident enough of my Christianity to share it with non-believers, but having immersed myself in the hospital very quickly (as one of only two doctors initially), I soon became involved in Bible studies with student nurses. Later I was asked by a small village church to 'be their missionary'. My training at ANCC, the work I had done with the church, and relationships with local pastors, led to me being asked to help them run seminars for elders and then for women's and youth leaders too.

My role in church ministry was building up the church, whether in the elders' seminars or preaching in my local church and running women's meetings. There was little opportunity for evangelism because the population were largely church goers. ➔



### 🕊️ LETTING LOCAL LEADERS LEAD

Kapsowar was a very well established mission station and I began to wonder if I shouldn't move on. An advert talking of the need for a doctor to work in Chad caught my eye, but I would need to learn French and Arabic so I put the idea on the back burner. It was perhaps two years later, when I had decided that I needed further Bible and mission training to enable me in the church side of my work, that I returned to do the master's programme at All Nations. I was convinced that, for the health of Kapsowar, local leaders needed to take over and it would be better for me to move on.

Whilst at All Nations I was considering where God would have me go. Several opportunities were presented to me, but many were in areas with established churches. Chad again presented itself, but it was different with over 50% of the population being Muslims. After my master's, I visited Chad to see how I felt about conditions there, but this only served to confirm a conviction which I already had: Chad was where I should go.

Once in Chad, the church wanted me to work at Bebaalem Hospital in the south, but I felt led to help the church health centres scattered widely around the southern part of the country. Some of these were in Christian areas (though many associated with very small, poorly established churches), but several were in animist or Muslim areas. They had been largely neglected for some years and this job seemed to fit the skills I acquired in Kapsowar. I could encourage spiritually while helping with medical and administrative training. It was a much bigger job than I had realised, but

God enabled me, first in providing me with a partner to work with to find the health centres and as an aid in cross-cultural work, and later in giving me strength and wisdom. The job was very busy and, when I wasn't helping in the centres, I was busy at Bebaalem Hospital which severely lacked doctors. I found myself less involved in overtly spiritual work than in Kapsowar. I sought to encourage others to evangelism, but I wasn't involved myself.

### A FOCUS ON THE UNREACHED

Then in AIM's leadership meetings in 2014, our International Director presented what he called our 'Framework' that would form the basis of AIM's five year vision plan (Vision 2020). He talked about the need to prioritise taking the gospel to people groups who, without the deliberate actions of others, would never hear about Jesus. I sat there knowing that he was right, this had to be our focus. It had to be my focus.

I returned to Bebaalem determined to encourage others (!) to go out and reach the unreached – especially the students at the nursing school attached to the hospital, but also in hospital devotions and in a local church which asked me to preach and lead Bible studies sometimes. It was three months later that I felt God saying to me that I should go north to the unreached of Chad myself.

In March 2015 I finally reached a city in the Muslim, northern two thirds of Chad. I was to lead a team with a view to reaching the Neem people. We started with two years of learning Chadian Arabic and culture, and working among the many people groups of the city. I



started to learn the Neem language, but found it a challenge with Neem people scattered through the city. The city has several large churches attended by southern Christians, but the surrounding villages and small towns have no such witness and are majority Neem populations. It seemed time to move on again. As early as 2016 God made me consider the small town where I now live, but it was only after several visits that AIM considered I was ready to move there a year ago.

### **LIFE IN A SMALL TOWN**

The town where I currently live is much smaller with a population of 10,000. It is very undeveloped and most of its inhabitants are poor, subsistence farmers. Over 95% are Neem. Being Muslims, I can only build relationships with local women. Many of the local women know little of 'their religion' but are bound by its customs and rituals alongside fears stemming from animist beliefs. They have little hope for the future.

My heart goes out to them, and more and more I wish they could know the love of God seen in Jesus as I do. How can they change? They must first hear who Jesus is and what he came to do. Who will they listen to? Relationships must first be made and my medical work helps me into such relationships. Then, just visiting, spending time, sharing their lives, gives me opportunities to speak of the gospel. God has changed me in that I am ready and eager to talk of his desire to be reconciled with us in Christ and the hope we can have of a relationship with him. There are many needs and therefore many openings to show God's love and to have the chance to speak. Most women are illiterate or semi-literate. Many have little knowledge of hygiene and health. People often stay at home rather than going to hospital for treatment. They are set in older ways of farming. How much more could be done with more people? We pray that the small number of local Christians might seek to understand the language and share their faith. We pray for other team members to join me.

**The name of the people group has been changed for security reasons.**



## **JOIN THE NEEM TEAM**

Could you use your skills to join a team in Chad, working among the unreached Neem\* people? Showing Jesus' love as you communicate the gospel with them, the ultimate goal is to see reproducing, Bible based, self-sustaining churches, with Neem believers working hand in hand with other Chadian believers. The team will seek to make disciples through bold proclamation of the gospel. They will also be involved in intentional discipling, encouraging local believers to form Neem churches, and mobilising and equipping them for evangelism.

Alongside this, you would also take up practical roles in the community. There is currently a small government hospital in the team's town that would be an ideal location for medical work in the community, providing a way to build relationships with local people. There are also plenty of other roles, including informal teaching in homes and (perhaps) in a community centre, as well as opportunities to help out in the school run by the local church. Farming experience and willingness to model conservation agriculture would be very useful.

To join the team you will require a Level 3 in French and will learn Chadian Arabic and then the Neem language. You also will need appropriate professional qualifications for your assignment.

Find out more or apply at:  
**[eu.aimint.org/neem](http://eu.aimint.org/neem)**



# PRAY FOR THE NEEM\* PEOPLE

## WHO ARE THEY?

They are one of the largest non-Arab people groups in Chad with a population of around 450,000 people. Living in north eastern Chad with Neem settlements stretching into Sudan, they speak a language that's distinctively different from neighbouring groups. Known for being a conservative people, they have a strong sense of identity and are resistant to change. They have a reputation for being wary of outsiders. Even today there is a mixed attitude in rural areas to modern-style education, although with the arrival of satellite TV in the towns, mobile phones and other forms of exposure to the outside world, traditional worldviews are being challenged. Younger people are much more open to change.

*“Pray many Neem people would hear these Bible stories and, hearing them, want to know Jesus better.”*

## WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?

The Neem people strongly identify themselves as Muslim although some know little of Islam's beliefs. Thus, their Islamic practices are blended with traditional African religious rituals. Many people live in fear, using amulets and charms to ward off evil and sickness.

## WHAT IS BEING DONE TO REACH THEM WITH THE GOSPEL?

A small team of AIM missionaries began work among them in one of their larger towns in 2015, and another organisation also has a team which has started work among the Neem. In 2020 the AIM team moved to a more rural location, with the aim of meeting Neem people in their heartland. We're currently looking to add more workers to our team. Could God be calling you to go, or to share this need?

The name of the people group has been changed for security reasons.



# WHAT CAN WE PRAY FOR?

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Pray that many Neem people would understand the fear and lack of hope in what they now believe so that they might look for something better and find Jesus.

Currently there is no Bible in the Neem language. Genesis has been translated but not published. John's gospel has been translated but needs checking. Pray for more people to work on Bible translation.

The audio recording of Genesis is currently happening. Pray that the Old Testament stories would resonate with this traditionally agrarian people and they would see how God longs for his people to return to him. Give thanks that there are forty audio Bible stories available, sharing the gospel from creation through to Pentecost. Pray that many Neem people would hear these stories and, hearing them, want to know Jesus better.

Many of the Neem people are illiterate, so pray for creative ideas for how to disciple and encourage believers. Pray for one lady who has believed, that she would be keen to know more and would be strengthened in her faith.

Churches in the Neem areas are run and attended by those who have migrated from southern Chad. Pray these Chadians will catch the vision for outreach into their new communities and be willing to share with their Muslim neighbours.

Neem people who make a decision for Christ risk being ostracised from their Muslim family and friends once their decision becomes public. Pray for wisdom for them in when to proclaim their new faith and that they will find a new community among Christians to support them.



## DOCTORS

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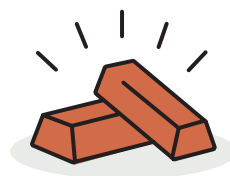
There are 3.7 Chadian doctors per 100,000 people in Chad. In the UK, we have 2.8 doctors for every 1,000 people.



## TOWER OF BABEL

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Chad is known as 'The Babel Tower of the World' because over 120 different languages are spoken there. French and Arabic are official languages used for trade.



## GOLD RUSH

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Several areas in Chad have gold but they are mainly exploited by individuals panning for gold, hoping to return home with the means of starting a new life. Many are disappointed and neglect their families for months or years in their search for riches. There is no industrialised mining for gold.

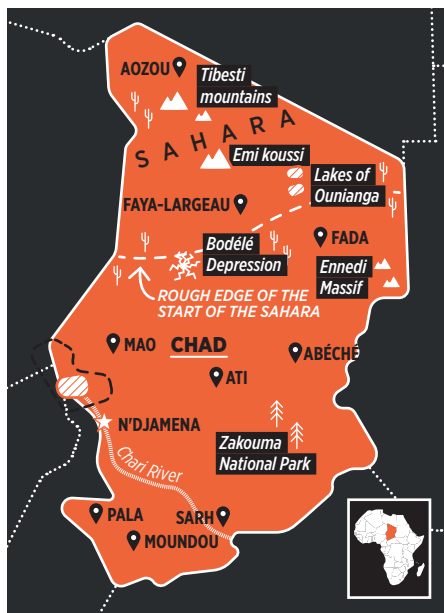
You can download our prayer PDFs from: [eu.aimint.org/resources](http://eu.aimint.org/resources).

# WHAT'S GOING ON IN CHAD?

Idriss Déby has been the president of Chad for the past 30 years. On 11 April 2021, Déby competed for his sixth term. Many are tired of his regime and ready for change – change, however, is not easy. The only changes that have happened in the Chadian political system have occurred through armed conflict. Please pray for peace for this country, but also that there would be justice.

Security is another issue that constantly seems to be before Chad – Boko Haram is on our western border, to the north is the ongoing Libyan conflict, to the east is the volatile Darfur region with a porous border, and to the southeast the CAR conflict continues. Regardless of the outcomes of the election, pray that the country is led well through these challenges and manages the threat to its people justly and with caution.

*“There are so many amazing and wonderful opportunities to serve the Lord and freely minister to unreached people groups here.”*



We're grateful that in Chad, Covid-19 has not had the devastating effects so far that we've seen elsewhere. Whilst the pandemic meant that two families and a single took the decisions to return to their home countries, we have still welcomed five new families and three new singles to the unit since last September. God has been faithful to provide labourers for this harvest field in spite of the complications of travelling and getting visas during this time. We have also been rejoicing at news of several others who have committed to join different ministry teams here in Chad and are in the process of coming here from different sending countries.

There are so many amazing and wonderful opportunities to serve the Lord and freely minister to unreached people groups here. As long as Chad stays a secular country and its borders are open, let's walk through these open doors, as acknowledged missionaries, ready to work with the Chadian church to proclaim the gospel to those waiting to hear it.

## BY JUSTIN

Justin serves as AIM's Country Leader in Chad after having served in a range of locations across the country with his wife, Krista and their children.



# ENNEDI MASSIF

75% of the Ennedi Massif in north east Chad has not yet been explored. This sandstone plateau has been eroded to create an otherworldly landscape of canyons, cliffs, natural arches and mushroom shaped rocks. The area covers about 50,000 square kilometres of the Sahara and is very hard to access. Because of this, its remarkable biodiversity has survived with no external influences. Water can be found in some of the largest canyons, playing a huge role in the ecosystem. As well as supporting various flora and fauna, it also sustains as many as 30,000 people from two semi-nomadic people groups who move through Ennedi each year. Once a species which lived throughout the Sahara, there are now four remaining desert crocodiles which live in Ennedi.

The area has been classed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2016, for both its natural and cultural features. On many of the cave walls are prehistoric paintings, which give us an insight into how people used to live, and the effect the changing climate has had on the people here over thousands of years. An area which has suffered from poaching and unsustainable use of resources, it is now under the management of African Parks, who are working to protect and conserve the area's ecosystem so that those who depend on it for survival can continue to do so.



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**Getting started:** In the first reflection (on page 7) we looked at sin and its consequences. As you think of the Neem people and others in Chad, as well as people close to you, the idea of hell as an eternal destiny can be very hard to wrap our head around. It can be especially difficult to reconcile that idea with a loving God. What do you find hardest?



**Read Psalm 5:4-5.** Perhaps one of the reasons that we struggle is because we don't fully recognise how bad sin is? God is so pure, holy and righteous, he utterly hates sin, he can't bear it. Throughout the Bible whenever someone encounters God, they often fall flat on their faces, like Isaiah. He sees God in all his holiness. "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips..." (Isaiah 6:5).

John 3:16 is probably the most famous verse in the Bible. **Read verses 16-17.** Was it really necessary for Jesus to die? Do we really believe that there are no other ways for someone to get into a right relationship with God?

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**Bringing it home:** Read and reflect on Romans 5:8. God hasn't left us with our sinfulness. He has given his all for us. Spend some time reflecting on what that means for you, personally. It might help to write it down. Does this change the way you feel about sharing about Jesus with others?



# GIVE THANKS AND PRAY

## HEAR GOD'S CALL

Pray for more people to hear God's call to go to unreached people groups in Chad. There are 78 people groups in Chad still waiting to hear the gospel and far too few people to take the good news to them. Pray particularly for French speaking people to be willing to live and minister in Chad.

## SETTLING IN

Pray for those who have just begun ministry in Chad, as they go through the process of learning about and adjusting to a totally new way of life as well as a new language. Pray for perseverance in language learning and for an enjoyment of the good parts of Chadian life and culture.





## TURNING TO CHRIST

Pray that, despite the barriers to the gospel, we would see many Neem people turn to Christ. Pray for Chadians involved in Bible translation, that as they read the words of Scripture, they would take them seriously and want to know more about what they mean and who Jesus is.

## COVID-19

Give thanks that Covid-19 has not yet had a devastating effect in Chad; death rates are not rising and hospitals don't appear significantly busier. Pray this would continue, that missionaries would be able to minister effectively and churches keep meeting and sharing the good news.

## TO EXPLORE MORE

Give thanks for the work of the English Language Centre in Chad and the opportunity there is to use the Bible in lessons. Pray that the words students hear and thoughts they form would linger in their minds, and that they would be interested to explore more of God's Word.





# GUIDED TO GO

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**After a short term assignment in Chad, Paul recently returned to begin long term ministry, teaching English and sharing the gospel.**

Visiting some relatives who were working in Mozambique when I was a child led to me falling in love with Africa as a place. When I became a Christian, I had this passion for Africa, coupled with a new passion for telling everyone I'd meet about Jesus. It was logical for me to put those two passions together and to tell people about Jesus in Africa. In the years after my conversion, I started investigating more and more: What specifically will I do? Where specifically will I go? Can I actually do this?

After chatting with different mission organisations and missionaries over the years, it became clear that the greatest need was in Islamic Africa, among the thousands of people groups who have never heard the gospel or had a chance to respond to it. Specifically, French speaking Africa kept coming up as something to pursue as there are fewer missionaries who speak French. I studied French at university and I took every opportunity to learn more about Islam and engage with Muslim friends.

## **DISCOVERING CHAD**

I spent a year in Senegal and, during that time, became good friends with a Chadian man. That friendship triggered my interest in Chad. I researched Chad, Chadian history, Chadian culture, and discovered the massive number of unreached people groups in this country. It astounded me.

I'm aware that, for many people, the road to this kind of work is nowhere near simple. But for me, everything feels like it has been leading to this since I was eight years old. There has never really been a single moment in my life that's made me question it. At times

I've obviously had doubts but there has never been anything to make me think I should be staying in the UK or doing something totally different with my life. There are always doubts, always questions. But God has, very clearly, at every major step of my life, facilitated me continuing on this path. My university studies and the different travelling experiences I have been privileged to take have reinforced the calling that I've felt.

## **DISCOVERING THE BIBLE**

Now I teach English at an English Centre in Chad. Everyone in the city knows that we use the Bible to teach English at the Centre. Some people may be put off coming to the Centre because of that. Of those who do come, some remain pretty apathetic and disinterested. But lots of them discover that the Bible is super interesting and super challenging. Especially when we get into who Jesus is, in the New Testament class – that's when it all goes crazy. Lots of them don't remain apathetic and they do actually really engage with that side of the class, not just the English. Almost all of the students are from totally unreached people groups where there isn't a single church and there are three or four believers from their whole people group. God has opened so many doors!

Another real encouragement, as well as the spiritual side of things, is the material way that we are able to help our students. Lots of my students are petroleum engineers. Chad has oil, and there is a university in the north which specialises in everything to do with oil. It's become a rite of passage that if you finish your degree, you then study at the English Centre where I work, you learn English and once you have that skill, you will get a job with one of the oil companies. Often my students will arrive in class unemployed but by the time they finish, or soon after, they often have a job with the oil companies. Obviously, our real hope is that they respond to the gospel, but even with that aside, it's encouraging to see that we are contributing to the improved welfare of these students, their families and their children. That feels really rewarding.



# INTEREST IN JESUS

**Paul tells us about some of the men who have studied at the English Centre and their reactions to reading the Bible.**

Azir was one of my students at the English Centre last year when I served short term. Since being back in Chad, I've discovered that he lives just around the corner from me. He's about 25, and was born and raised in Saudi Arabia (which lots of Chadians are). Many don't have documentation to be there, so six years ago he and his family were kicked out and sent back to Chad.

This is a common story among the men I meet here. Now, he has a little stall on a street corner not far from my house where he sells sweets and cigarettes. His motivation to study English is to enable him to have a bigger shop

where he can sell more things, branch out and make more money.

Last year, while I was teaching him, he failed the end of class exams. He decided to take a break in order to work on getting up to the level he needed to pass the exam before coming back. Since I've been back, he has returned to the Centre. We use the Bible to teach English so at the moment he's going through the Old Testament in his classes. Last Christmas he wanted to know more, so he asked to read the story of Christmas in the Bible together. So we read it, and since then he has come back another couple of times to read more, which is really exciting. He's not made any declaration of faith but he has shown interest, which is great.

Tahir was also one of my students when I was here last year. He finished all the classes, which meant that as part of his English studies, he read the Bible story from creation to Pentecost. He went through it all, seeing the life of Jesus, how he so clearly fulfilled





## TAKE TIME TO PAUSE AND REFLECT...

What are your reflections from the articles and Scripture you have read through Connect so far?

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Over 55% of Chad's population are still waiting to hear about Jesus. Without people like Paul and Ann going to them, many will never have the opportunity to learn of God's salvation. How does knowing this affect your thoughts about mission?

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We have been saved by God's grace, at the priceless cost of God's only son. Why not spend some time giving thanks for that wonderful truth, and for those who shared the gospel with you?

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the Old Testament prophecies and that he claimed to be God. We became fairly good friends, and he would occasionally come to my house to play Bananagrams. But he never showed any further interest in the Bible.

Since I've been back, we have a new AIM colleague from America on our team, who has just started working at the English Centre. Lots of old students continue to come to the English Centre to meet friends, chat in English, continue practising. Tahir and my new colleague built up a friendship and started reading the Bible together. After never really showing much interest, Tahir has now started to say that he believes in Jesus, he believes that Jesus is God and he wants to follow him, to have a good relationship with God. It's super exciting. I had kind of presumed that nothing was ever going to come of that relationship, so I didn't bother to invest in it. Praise God that I was wrong and my colleague didn't do the same thing!

All names have been changed for security reasons.

# WHAT CAN I DO?

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Jean-Philippe is an Assistant Professor in France. For years he dreamed of being a missionary doctor but God called him to work in a secular French university hospital. His desire to get involved with mission didn't end though. He kept asking God, 'What can I do?'

In short, I am a father, a doctor, a teacher, a researcher, a husband, a handyman, a cook, a son and heir of the King of kings and all this in one and the same man; all this for a unique plan: the glory of God. I have always dreamed of being a 'Christian-physician' working in a Christian hospital, being able to have a holistic approach in my practice. God did not allow it; on the contrary, I currently work in one of the most secular and sceptical Western countries, France, among the most sceptical population: scientists.

However, through my role in France, my specialism in infectious diseases, and a partnership between the hospital I work in and one in Africa, God has seen fit to allow me to realise my dreams. What I didn't expect was that through this opportunity God was planning to transform me as he used me. So far, I have served in Africa three times, and not once have I come back as I left. Trains and airports are powerful places for sanctification! Long hours of transit have been opportunities to read transformative books. God also used the people I met in Africa to transform me, challenging me in the areas where I needed to grow. The biggest lesson (which perhaps I knew in my head but hadn't let permeate my heart) is that God leaves no space in our lives unploughed: every corner of our lives may bear fruit.

Many people like me can't take three months, let alone six or twelve off work to be involved in mission. But working alongside AIM and my job in this way has been perfect. I am giving my five loaves of bread and two fishes and God is able to multiply it!

**If, like Jean-Philippe, you're interested in mission but are worried about how it would fit with your current roles and responsibilities, we have a range of opportunities that might suit you:**

- Serve for one week among Africans in the UK based in a church in the Midlands.
- Attend a virtual team, learn about and pray with and for missionaries serving among Africans in Europe.
- Register your interest for a short prayer trip to North Africa. Meet locals, missionaries and pray for an Islamic city.

To find out more, visit: [eu.aimint.org/short-term-teams](https://eu.aimint.org/short-term-teams).







# PRAY FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN ISLANDERS

## **WHERE ARE THE ISLANDS?**

That's a question we can't really answer for security reasons. Suffice to say, they're in the Indian Ocean! They are strongly influenced by Islam - open proclamation of the gospel invites opposition for our missionaries, and conversion to Christianity can bring persecution for Island people. By living and working in these communities, learning local languages and understanding culture, it is possible to develop relationships through which the gospel can be shared. Bringing skills like English teaching and vocational training lends legitimacy to our missionaries' presence and helps the communities.

## **WHAT DO THEY BELIEVE?**

Each island has its own distinctive people group, with their own language, culture and beliefs, but all practise some form of Islam, mixed with a variety of traditional animistic

beliefs, occultism, ancestor worship and fear of the spirit world. Some younger people who have studied abroad are influenced by more fundamentalist Islam, while others are questioning their traditional beliefs and becoming more materialistic. There are few who follow Jesus.

## **WHAT IS BEING DONE TO REACH THEM WITH THE GOSPEL?**

TIMO (Training In Ministry Outreach) teams have lived and worked on the Islands in recent years. Now several individuals and families are continuing that pioneering work longer term. English language classes, literacy and numeracy teaching for women, and medical work are bringing positive benefits to the Islanders. Friendships which have been formed enable missionaries to speak about Jesus, pray for people and encourage the reading of Scripture.

# WHAT CAN WE PRAY FOR?

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More and more of the Bible is becoming available in Island languages on apps that people can access on phones and tablets. Give thanks for this ease of access and pray that many would read God's Word!

Pray that the few Island people who follow Jesus would know very deeply God's grace and love. Pray that they would have the courage they need to stand for Christ and would share their hope with their families and communities.

Despite there being no official church body on the Islands, some Islanders recently set up a WhatsApp group for local believers to send out encouragements to each other. This is a huge step in the right direction of connecting Islander believers and giving them a place to go for prayer and for encouragement in their own language. Please pray that more members will be added to this group, that it will remain secure and the body will not be harmed by access to this group falling into the wrong hands. Pray for their protection.

It is estimated that 97.9% of the population on the Indian Ocean Islands is unreached with the gospel. Pray for more labourers to come to this harvest field. We are starting to see real kingdom change, but more Christians are needed to disciple young Island believers. Please pray about whether you could respond to, or share about this need.

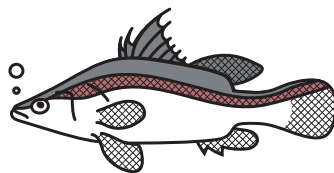
The Islanders are heavily involved in witchcraft, communicating with spirits and adding the occult to Islamic practices. As a consequence, it's not uncommon to encounter demon possession and evil spirits. Pray for protection for new believers and for missionaries.



## SOMETHING SMELLS GOOD...

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One of the major industries on the Islands is perfume distillation.



## FISHING

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Fishing remains small scale off the Islands, usually for subsistence rather than industry, despite tuna stocks. These are instead harvested by European countries.



## TRANS-OCEANIC TRADE ROUTE

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The Indian Ocean is the world's oldest long-distance trans-oceanic trading arena and is sometimes known as the cradle of globalisation.

You can download our prayer PDFs from: [eu.aimint.org/resources](http://eu.aimint.org/resources).





# SERVING AND FOLLOWING

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Sent through Calvary Ministries Worldwide (Capro), West African francophone missionaries Albert and Janet have worked alongside the AIM team on the Indian Ocean Islands. Albert shares their story.

Through my experiences of serving the Lord, I have come to understand that two things are essential: to keep hungering to know him more, and to submit to his plans no matter what the cost. These two heart attitudes must define our lives and ministry. The Lord said in John 12:26: “Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.”

## **FINDING GOD’S CALL**

In 2010, my wife and I were just steps away from permanently leaving our church planting post in West Africa after spending seven years serving there with Capro. The goal was to follow the call we had received from the Lord eight years earlier for the Mandingo people of Mali.

The hoped-for arrangements were finally met. The transfer of our responsibilities had happened, the Capro team in Mali was ready and looking forward to welcoming us. Then I was told about an urgent need for a missionary couple to serve among the Muslims of the Indian Ocean Islands. Initially I paid no attention – we were going to Mali – I didn’t even mention it to my wife! However, a few weeks later, as I meditated on the Word, the Holy Spirit brought me back to this need. To me it echoed the SOS from the Macedonian in Acts 16:9-10. A strong conviction took place in me and was confirmed when I talked to my wife. Quickly we realised that God’s schedule for us at that time was not what we planned. Although changing all our preparations was not easy, in mid-May 2012 we landed on the Indian Ocean Islands.

## **FINDING A WAY IN**

The Indian Ocean Islands are closed to the gospel. Islam is the only religion recognised by the state. Consequently, for an application for a residence visa it was necessary for us to have occupations that would serve the community.

Janet, in order to minister to local women, used the sewing training she had had several years before our marriage. With the help of external partners, she set up a sewing school where she volunteered to train and ➔



☛ support vulnerable women. This allowed her not only to offer these women income-generating activities, but above all to forge strong friendships that resulted in the sharing of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I felt called to reach local teachers, parents and students. So we created a library, as a way to have local interactions. Very strong friendships were nurtured that allowed me to testify to my faith in Jesus to several households and family leaders.

### **FINDING OPPOSITION**

Developing good relations with our local community was not enough to exempt us from the attentions of the local religious leaders. Their objections to us forced us to move from locality to locality. Through our

lifestyle, those living around us noticed that our Christian faith was at the centre of our whole lives. Very quickly, religious leaders noted that our Christian presence in their midst, and the influence we had on the population, represented a serious threat to the safeguarding of their Islam. From then on, we became the object of debate in public places and of their preaching in mosques. They forced the owners of our homes to terminate our rental contracts, or they cut short our development projects. Once we were summoned to the head of the judicial police as we were accused of Christian proselytising.

### **FINDING FAME**

However, in the shadow of all this travel and turmoil, we saw the Lord using it to spread



the fame of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it was in these moments of tension that the curiosity of a greater number of people was awakened, as questions were raised about the Christian faith and about Jesus. Ironically, being forced to move around the Islands meant we were able to spread the gospel further. The presence of Christian disciples among closed Muslim communities is a scandal, but so is the gospel!

More than seven years after entering the Islands, we have come to believe that the Mandingo field in Mali is whitening for the harvest, and that according to the Lord's agenda, he awaits us there. But his work isn't done among the Islands. Perhaps he's calling you there?

All names have been changed for security reasons.



**Getting started:** When it comes to your interactions and relationships with your friends, families and colleagues, would you find it easier to explain the gospel to them, or to do something that will help them out practically? What do you feel comfortable doing, if either? What do you feel uncomfortable doing, if either? Why?



**Read Matthew 5:16.** Our society can often seem quite sceptical and negative about religion. Is it better to stay quiet about our faith in Jesus and trust that our good works 'will shine before others'?

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**Read Matthew 28:18-20.** How do these verses challenge that idea? Make a note of words that are connected to geography or movement. What do these verses have to say to us 2000 years on?

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**Bringing it home:** Do you think your church family are aware of the millions of people who have never heard about Jesus? Are there ways in which you could raise their profile in your housegroup or in your church?





# DIRECTED BY DREAMS

We have prayed and prayed for women on this Island. Now God is giving his followers courage through their dreams to share his gospel with other women. Would you pray with us that this would be the start of an inpouring of Island women into the kingdom?

In Ma Imani's dream, she and a friend had gone to a town in the north of the island. As they stood outside a specific mosque, her friend questioned whether it was a good idea to be there (the town in the north is known to be very religious). Ma Imani replied that of course it was, for they were there for the women not the men. They found an older lady sitting outside who invited them to sit down and asked them why they'd come. Ma Imani told her that she'd been sent with a message to tell them. At this the woman

told her to wait while she went and gathered other women to come and listen! On their return, they all sat and listened intently as Ma Imani shared the good news.

Not one to waste time, a few days later, Ma Imani and a friend from that village took a taxi bus heading north – she said she was praying a lot on the way! Her friend is not a believer but has heard quite a lot and when Ma Imani explained to her why she wanted to go, she surprisingly agreed to accompany her. On their arrival, they went straight to the mosque Ma Imani had seen in her dream. As they walked up to it, she saw a woman sitting with her back to them. Could it be the woman from her dream? They walked past and then doubled back, and when she saw her face she had no doubt – it was her! The woman saw them



and welcomed them to come and sit down. Ma Imani decided on this first visit to keep things low key, so she just sat and chatted with her and the other women. When it came time for her to leave, she told them she'd come back, as she had something to tell them. They told her not to wait too long!

Ma Imani is not the only island woman to have had a dream.

On a different Indian Ocean Island, dreams played a significant role in Sophie's conversion and her commitment throughout the years. Just before Christmas she had another dream. In it, she saw a man in bright white who asked her what path she was following. She responded with, "What do you want me to do?" He gave her a holy book and then took her by the hand to where all her extended family were gathered. He then told her to stand in the middle and read what he had given her. It was the story of Jonah, and as she read it aloud she

understood and was able to explain the parallel to Jesus. Afterwards she fell to her knees pleading, crying, begging her family to accept the truth and Jesus who would save them. At this point she woke up. But she knew she was being asked to share the words she had been given with her family.

For a few years she has invited her family to eat a Christmas meal with her. This year, after everyone finished eating, she shared the gospel. It was a big step and she was scared, but she knew she needed to obey. She said it was met with mixed reactions – some disagreed but others listened with interest.

God is at work! The same God who has spoken to his people through dreams throughout the ages is speaking to Islanders today.

**All names and locations in this article are hidden for security reasons.**

# GIVE THANKS AND PRAY

## FOR MA IMANI AND SOPHIE

Pray that Ma Imani and Sophie will know that Jesus is with them and that they are not alone. Pray for all those with whom they share the gospel, that it will fall on soft and ready hearts. Pray that changed lives will impact communities and villages and that those who are threatening believers would come to know Jesus too!

## MERCY FROM COVID-19

Recently Covid-19 has swept through the Islands with devastating effects. The healthcare systems are not able to cope with severe cases and many have died. Pray for God's mercy on the Islands, for Islanders to cry out to him and be saved.





## FOR HEALTH AND RECOVERY

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AIM team members serving among the Indian Ocean Islands have also contracted Covid-19 and although recovering, a number are still feeling the after effects many weeks later. Pray for full restoration to health and for renewed energy.

## SETTLING IN TO THE ISLANDS

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Two new missionaries have recently joined the Island team, sent by churches in the UK. Pray for them as they settle in and start getting used to the Island culture. Eventually they hope to use their medical skills on the Island, but their first priority will need to be language learning.

## DREAMS OF JESUS

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Pray for Esther. It had become known in her village that she follows Jesus, and some people insulted and threatened her, saying that they would destroy her home. Not long after, she had a dream of a man in all white, shining so brightly she couldn't see his face. He told her not to worry because he will meet with those people who threatened her and they will know him. Pray she would witness lives changed.





# GOSPEL MEDICS

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Could you proclaim Christ to the unreached people of the Islands as you serve them through medical work?

Healthcare is a huge need on the Islands and we are starting a new medical team in a poorer region. We are looking for individuals who want to join with us in our vision to see

healthy individuals and communities in the holistic sense of the word, seeing sicknesses being healed and fewer preventable illnesses. But also, people relating rightly to God and his creation, free from bondage to evil spirits, practising justice, seeking peace, and using the creativity and resources God has given them to meet their needs.

## WORD AND DEEDS

Compassionate medical care must go hand in hand with verbal proclamation of the gospel. Working within the Island health





system will provide abundant opportunity for prayer and lifestyle witness as well as relationship building. However, strategic evangelism and discipleship happens better in an environment outside of healthcare and intentional time and effort must be given to this. The vision of the team is a church planting team first and foremost. We long to see reproducing indigenous churches on the Islands. Will you come and join us in this work?

To find out more details, visit:  
**[eu.aimint.org/islands-medical](https://eu.aimint.org/islands-medical)**.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We know this specific opportunity won't be right for everyone, but we still need you! Could you pray this opportunity would be filled? Or could you share this opportunity with people you think might be a good fit? If you would like to download some graphics to share this opportunity with your church or on your social media, you can find them at: **[eu.aimint.org/islands-medical](https://eu.aimint.org/islands-medical)**.






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