

A vision for the other sheep

A message from Luke Herrin, AIM's International Director



AFRICA
INLAND MISSION

REACHING THE LOST SHEEP OF NORTH AND WEST AFRICA

Africa Inland Mission (AIM) began with a vision, to penetrate inland Africa with the gospel of Jesus Christ and to reach the *“other sheep that are not of this fold”* (John 10:16). The vision was to establish a line of mission stations from Mombasa on the Indian Ocean to Lake Chad, thousands of miles to the north west. And so, it began. First in Kenya, and then into Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Congo, the Central African Republic, and finally Chad. It took 80 years, prayer, hard work and sometimes the lives of pioneer missionaries, but above all, the grace, power, and leading of our Lord. On the way, many souls were won for the kingdom and many lives were transformed, churches were planted, schools and hospitals built, and African pastors and evangelists trained. AIM spread in other directions as well, to the south and north, the islands of the Indian Ocean, and into the African Diaspora scattered among the nations.

AN UNFINISHED WORK

While we celebrate what the Lord has done through AIM (and many others!) the work remains unfinished. On the other side of this article is a map with white dots highlighting the Unreached People Groups of Africa and the great unfinished task of missions.

THE OTHER SHEEP

The Lord Jesus loves all his sheep: those who follow him already, and the yet unreached sheep in North and West Africa. He is calling them into his sheepfold and building his church among them. Jesus said, in Matthew 24:14, that *“this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will*

come.” All nations. This refers, not to political countries, like Niger or Senegal or China or the UK, but to the *“tribes, languages, peoples and nations”* of Revelation 5:9, like the Wolof, Maninka, Hausa, and Fulani of West Africa.

It is AIM’s vision and passion to see churches established among all African people groups, including those in the North and West of Africa. This is not a new vision for AIM, but a new direction flowing from the original 1895 vision. The Lord has already led us North 17 years ago, with missionaries in several North African countries. What about the North West?

PIONEERING AND PARTNERING

The equatorial countries of West Africa are ethnically mixed and although predominantly Muslim, they are somewhat religiously tolerant. Church and missionary work is allowed, and mission partners are welcome here. The long-term missionary work needed in West Africa will require pioneering and strategic thinking. It will take a careful approach with a great deal of humility and partnerships with those who have gone before us. It will also require the adoption of new methods and strategies to be fruitful.



A NEW EMPHASIS

A Northwest orientation is an emphasis, not a complete redeployment. AIM very much values its missionaries, church partners, and work in the rest of Africa.

The arrows on the map pointing to the North and West represent a movement of African missionaries to the 40 million Fulani, and 20 million Somali, 100 million Arabs and Berbers, 53 million Hausa, 10 million Maninka of North and West Africa, and 100s of other unreached peoples. We need foreign missionaries, going directly to the people of the North and West, but also to the East, Centre, and South, to help train church leaders and mobilise African missionaries.

TO THOSE WHO HAVE NEVER HEARD

At the end of Luke 4, we find Jesus in Capernaum, doing powerful kingdom ministry and undoubtedly teaching. As more and more people arrived to receive ministry, the people of Capernaum understandably wanted him to stay, and even wanted to detain Him! But Jesus said: *“I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose.”* With this, he moved on to preach in the synagogues of Judea. Jesus left fruitful ministry to go to places that had not yet heard the gospel. There is a lesson for AIM in this.

Our ministry in Eastern, Central, and Southern Africa has been wonderful and fruitful. But some places and nations and peoples have yet to hear the gospel. Our orientation should continue to be to the North and West, and our emphasis should be towards places and people that have no church, no witness, no gospel. This is and will remain the primary role of missions: to bring the gospel to people and places where Jesus is not known. We want to see Jesus glorified, disciples made, and churches planted across all of Africa and among Africans who live in other parts of the world. And one day, to witness and be part of the fulfilment of Revelation 5:9, gathered around the throne of Jesus and worshipping

Him with Kamba of Kenya, Sukuma of Tanzania, Karamojong of Uganda, Mwani of Mozambique, Merina of Madagascar, Kango of Congo, Laarim of South Sudan, Maba of Chad, Indian Ocean Islanders, together with Fulani, Berbers, Arabs, Maninka, Hausa, Sudanese, Somali of East Africa and the Diaspora, and so so many others.

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SOME OF THE LOST PEOPLES

TUAREG

Nomadic pastoralists who inhabit the Sahara from southwestern Libya to southern Algeria, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso.

Population: 3.6 million
Islam: 99.9%
Estimated workers needed: 76

BERABISH BEDOUIN

A pastoralist nomadic group, primarily found in the Sahara Desert, north west of Timbuktu in Mali.

Population: 130,000
Islam: 99.9%
Estimated workers needed: 2

WOLOF

A large ethnic group, most of whom are in the West African countries of Senegal and The Gambia.

Population: 5.9 million
Islam: 99.5%
Estimated workers needed: 48

FULANI

A pastoralist trading people who are scattered throughout West Africa from Lake Chad to the Atlantic coast.

Population: 41.5 million
Islam: 98.9%
Estimated Workers Needed: 839

MOORS

Today, the term Moor is used to designate the predominant Arab-Amazigh ethnic group in the West Sahel region.

Population: 4.7 million
Islam: 99.9%
Estimated workers needed: 98

HAUSA

An ethnic group residing mainly in Niger, Chad and Nigeria's savannah regions but also Benin, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Senegal.

Population: 56.4 million
Islam: 98.9%
Estimated workers needed: 1,133

SONINKE

A West African ethnic group, living in the valley of the upper Senegal river and along the Mali–Senegal–Mauritania border.

Population: 3.9 million
Islam: 99.5%
Estimated workers needed: 79

MANINKA & FULANKE

Subgroups of a large people group known as the Mande, who inhabit the northern plains and coastal forests of West Africa.

Population: 6.7 million
Islam: 99.9%
Estimated workers needed: 48

PRAYING FOR THE NORTH AND WEST OF AFRICA

I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold

John 10:16

In North and West Africa, Christians and churches are scarce, and Islam is predominant among many of these people groups. There is also much less mission work going on compared to other parts of the continent. Many in these countries may never hear about Jesus.

KEY: The dots represent unreached people groups

How is God calling you to play your part in reaching them?



Praying for partners
 AIM is looking at how we can partner with churches to send more workers to Niger, Mali, Senegal and Guinea as well as other North African countries where there is no official church presence. Join us as we pray together.

For those serving
 Pray for our missionaries, going to North and West Africa, but also to the East, Centre, and Southern Africa to help train church leaders and mobilise more African missionaries.

Without Christ
 There are almost 1,000 African unreached people groups, mostly in North and West Africa. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out more workers into his harvest field.

The unreached?
 A people group among whom there are so few indigenous Christians and resources that they are unable to evangelise or grow a Christian community without outside assistance.

More workers
 Please pray for AIM's North West Orientation and that the Lord will use us to raise up more workers for the unreached people groups of this region.

The African Church
 Our vision and heart is to see churches among all African people groups, including those in North and West of Africa. This is not a new vision for AIM, but a new direction flowing from the original vision.



Beyond Africa
 We also want to see Jesus glorified, disciples made, and churches planted among the 19.5 million Africans who live in other parts of the world. Visit borderlessafrica.org to find out more.

