

GLOBAL MISSIONS

Spring 2007

Taking God's Word to God's People

Visiting Believers in Tanzania

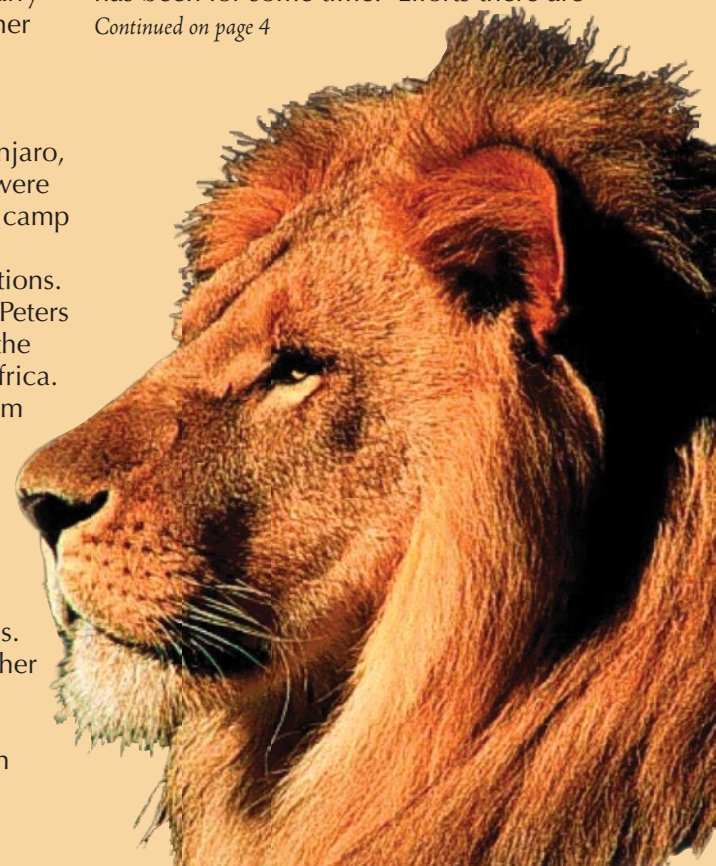
On the coast of East Africa, bordering the Indian Ocean, situated between Kenya and Mozambique, lies the nation of Tanzania. It is exotic and beautiful with snowcapped mountains, rolling plains, dense jungle and diverse wildlife. With a population of more than thirty-six million from 120 ethnic groups, it is one of Africa's largest nations and one of the poorest. In Tanzania's larger cities modern conveniences are commonplace, but for those living just outside those cities, life is primitive, almost beyond comprehension. Like much of the rest of Africa, Tanzania struggles with disease, malnutrition and ethnic tensions. Despite the poverty and harsh living conditions, Believers in Tanzania are spreading the Message throughout their nation, and churches are growing at a rapid pace. Recently Brother Barry Coffey, Brother Joe Coffey, and Brother Steve Fulkerson visited these saints.

Swahili for believers in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and as far away as the Congo.

From Arusha the brothers traveled to Dar Es Salaam, the largest city in Tanzania with more than two million people. It is the major financial and industrial center of the country. Though its name means, "haven of peace," it has experienced extreme violence in the past decade. The pastor of the church in Dar Es Salaam is Brother Mwangoka who was the first Message believer in East Africa and today is a key elder in that part of the continent. There, Bro. Barry was able to visit the new church that is under construction for Believers in that city.

Tanzania is a nation where the Message has been for some time. Efforts there are
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Their first stop was the small city of Arusha in the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro, close to the border of Kenya. They were there to preach at the annual family camp which is attended by Believers from across Tanzania and surrounding nations. It is sponsored by Pastor Zephaniah Peters who is one of the ministers leading the spread of the Message throughout Africa. Brother Zephaniah and ministers from his church are getting the Message to the African people in several ways. They travel into the jungles of Tanzania to preach the Gospel to people who live in caves in places so primitive they do not even have containers to hold water for baptisms. In addition to missionary work, Brother Zephaniah also oversees a large printing and distribution operation which is providing Message books in



Brother Zephaniah Peters, pastor in Arusha



Believers with new Bibles



Tanzanian worship



Bro. Barry & Bro. Mwangoka on his left at the site of the new church in Dar Es Salaam



Examining a newly printed Message book



Worship at the meetings in the United Arab Emirates



Attending a meeting

The Great Commission in the Arab World

In the Arab world, one is surrounded by Islam at every turn. The skyline is broken with minarets; women are covered from head to toe, exposing only their eyes. Calls to prayer echo through the streets five times a day. Though these Middle Eastern countries claim to have free and open societies, the reality is that Islamic tradition regulates and controls every aspect of a Muslim's daily life. It is not a religion of choice for those in this part of the world; it is a way of life.

There is a difference between being Arab and being Muslim, though the terms are often used interchangeably. To be Arab is a cultural distinction, referring to citizenship in one of twenty-two Arab countries. The combined population of modern Arab states is rather small, thought to be just over 300 million people. To be Muslim is a religious distinction, and over 80% of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims live outside the Arab world.

The door to the Arab world has been closed to Christianity for centuries. Our first opportunity to see this mysterious land came in October of 2006: a trip to the United Arab Emirates.

The Emirates hold lavish wealth amidst the ancient traditions of Islam. Situated on a tiny peninsula to the east of Saudi Arabia, the UAE has established itself as the modern capitol of the Arab world. Today, the UAE compromises of seven sheikdoms, the two largest of which carry the names of their respective capitol cities, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Dubai is considered the jewel

of the desert, a paradise on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula.

Maintaining Dubai's rapid development requires workers resulting in a large population of immigrants from the Philippines, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan, who come for higher wages. There is a vast social and cultural divide between the Arabs and these immigrants. They have no influence within their communities and few options but to live in poor housing and earn low wages for their labor.

Sharjah, home to the immigrant community, is located to the northeast of Dubai. It is a large but less developed city, commonly referred to as the cultural center of the Arab world. Stepping into Sharjah is like stepping back in time, until the sun rises upon hundreds of thousands of workers making their way to the glistening construction projects of Dubai. Sharjah, with mosques on nearly every corner, and ancient fishing dhows lining the docks, is very diverse; a unique blend of the old and new.

The Arab world as a whole is unique due to the deep-rooted union of church and state. The heavy cooperation between Islam and local governments is clearly designed to withstand western influence, and extinguish any outside attempts to introduce Christianity. This factor, combined with the hostilities among the people, racial tension, and international conflicts, present an unprecedented challenge for the spread of Christianity and the Bride of Christ.

The work of the great commission in this region is very new, and until our recent visit,



Book distribution



Brother Barry Coffey & Brother Jim Crook in the United Arab Emirates

little had been done to spread the Message. With 75% of the population holding immigrant status, Christianity has trickled into the region along with the many cultures and religions that accompany this migration. However, these immigrants are not able to freely share the gospel. Since the Emirates need these workers, the local government allows them to practice their varied religions among themselves. Though the government may not persecute the denominational Christian community directly, non-Muslims face daily pressure from the powerful Islamic religious community determined to suppress Christian influence and the spread of truth.

While these obstacles prevented us from sharing the Message with the Arabs, we were able to present it to small Christian churches spread throughout Sharjah's immigrant community. Our time in Dubai was limited, as were the venues where we were asked to speak. Brother Irshad, a Pentecostal man from Pakistan who served as our translator throughout the trip, gave us very useful information about these isolated groups. Even though Christianity is permitted in Sharjah, there are no visible Christian church buildings. Instead, community centers serve as gathering places for denominational believers. Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, and Pentecostals often share the same building, and can only rent meeting rooms when they are available. But this does not deter them, and gathering at 10:00 PM is no obstacle. Their worship is very unique, and since these believers are from other parts of Asia, they bring their instruments and their music with them. We spent the short time we had with them introducing topics such as the Godhead, end time prophecy, and the Malachi 4. It was warmly received, but their knowledge of the truth is limited.

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Mission Documentaries

Two years ago the first issue of this newsletter, *Global Missions* was published. That first issue stated that *Global Missions'* purpose was to cover the spread of the Gospel in nations around the world, the people involved, and to bring two parts of the Globe together – the missions field and those who support mission work. The work that is taking place around the world is truly vast, and we are always looking for effective ways to communicate what the Lord is doing.

The last issue of *Global Missions* contained an article about a series of DVDs documenting the world-wide spread of the Message. Since then Brother Barry Coffey and Brother Joe Coffey have traveled to Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, and Tanzania gathering footage and interviews with the saints in those nations. In addition to containing testimonies and footage of meetings, these DVDs look at life in each country, the difficulties missionaries face, and the progress that has been made in these locations. It is our hope that this series will present the viewer with a general overview of the efforts being made to present the Gospel to those living abroad.

To obtain these documentaries free of charge and see what God is doing around the world, e-mail Brother Barry at barrcof@gmail.com.



Great Commission *continued*

In fellowshipping and ministering to the group of Christians in Sharjah, it became increasingly clear that the region has never seen a true representation of Christianity. The denominational representation of the Gospel, with its liberal way of life and lack of holiness, has left many unanswered questions among the immigrant community. After testifying of our standards of holiness and separation, many rejoiced to hear that there are true believers in the west that live by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The west, with its sin and immorality, has cast a reproach on Christianity. This reproach makes introducing the Gospel even more difficult in the Muslim world.

It is sobering to note that the United Arab Emirates is one of the most liberal countries in the entire Arab world. To be hampered already in a modernized city such as Dubai, one cannot help but wonder what challenges lie ahead in the rest of the Arab world where it is punishable by death to convert to Christianity. The reality of this can be felt a mere 120 miles from Dubai in Saudi Arabia, where Christians who have converted from Islam are still publicly tortured and executed. Despite this, it is exciting as the Bride of Christ to be given the opportunity to present the living Word to the Arab people, and to see truth finally begin to reach their hearts.



Attending a service



Brother Barry with local brothers



Brother Jim Crook



Questions and Answers

Around the world, the introduction of the Message has been preceded by the desire of the people to know and hear the truth. The United Arab Emirates is no different. Within the immigrant community of Dubai and Sharjah, many denominational Christians are becoming excited about the Message, and are eager to learn more. But the work is just beginning. We still have no access to the Arab community, which is very difficult to penetrate. Of the twenty-two Arab nations, only four countries are currently known to have any Believers whatsoever, and they are very isolated.

Hostilities toward the west are not likely to decrease in the near future, and there are millions of lives that have not been touched by the truth. It will be dangerous: converting from Islam is life threatening for new believers and missionaries, but nothing is too great to stand in the way of God's divine plan. We are commissioned to go into all the world preaching the gospel. Now that we have observed the difficulties that await, we must trust in God to open doors allowing us to reach the Arab world. He has given us a glimpse of the last frontier of the Message, and we found nothing like we were expecting. The people, the religion, the setting, and the history could prove to be the greatest test of the Great Commission as the Message reaches into this most tumultuous region of the earth.

Tanzania *continued*

not meant to be ground-breaking, but rather to encourage and uplift the Believers who are already doing so much in the area. From places like Arusha and Dar Es Salaam, local missionaries are already reaching the tribes of East Africa and doing outreach in the major cities as well. God has blessed the work there, and we are expecting Him to continue to do so as they continue to walk in the light of the hour. Despite the poverty and lack of modern facilities, it is a blessing to see how the Message has spread so completely through this part of the world.



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