



# AFRICA INLAND MISSION

Christ-Centred Churches  
Among all African Peoples

# AFRICA news

Apr-Sep 25

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We are afflicted in every way,  
but not crushed. Perplexed, but  
not driven to despair. Persecuted,  
but not forsaken. Struck down,  
but not destroyed.

But we have this treasure in  
Jars of clay to show that the  
surpassing power belongs to God  
and not to us.

## *In this issue:*

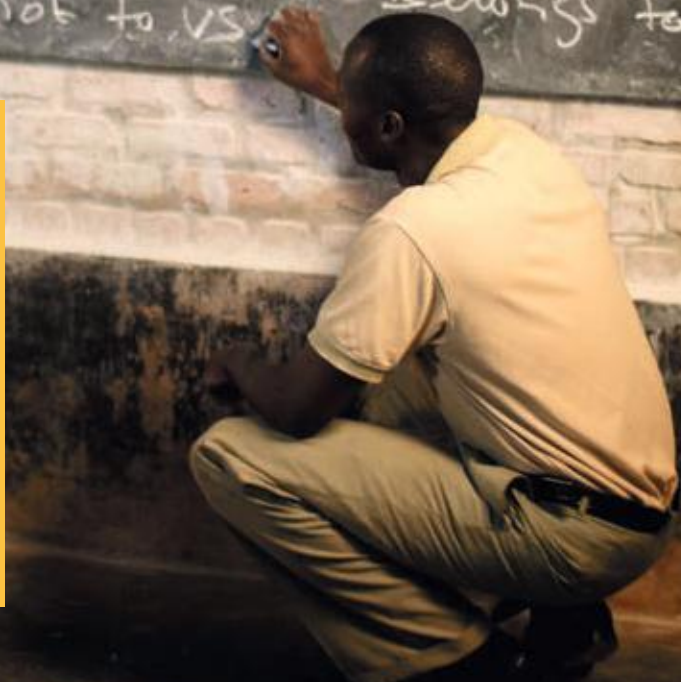
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# EDITOR'S LETTER

And finally, we're here, in Australia! After over two years of anticipating, preparing and waiting, my wife Heather and I touched down in Sydney on 30<sup>th</sup> January. By the time you read this we'll have been here long enough to have settled down a little ...we hope!

Thank you to those who have prayed for and with us along the way and have made us feel so welcome. God's timing we know is perfect and we've seen the blessing in the waiting, even though our patience has been tested at times.

But we've not reached any sense of conclusion. We're here to begin a new season of service and the sense of urgency to share the gospel with those who have no opportunity to hear – the unreached peoples of the world – is no less today than it was when Jesus commissioned the early church to be his witnesses in Jerusalem (where his people were), Judea, Samaria *and to the ends of the earth* (where his people were not).

In this issue we consider some of the challenges where good theological training is limited among churches in sub-Saharan Africa and where even the idea of church is so limited, if there at all, in the Muslim sweep of North Africa.

So please continue to pray with us as we seek to encourage an increasing number of churches in Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region to raise up a new generation of workers equipped for his unreached African harvest field, that the Lord will send many more to declare his glory and salvation to all peoples.

With churches in mind, one of our NSW Central Coast pastors openly shares (p10) the challenges of helping his church grapple with the challenge and responsibility of mission to unreached peoples ...perhaps you can share with your church leaders? We don't have all the answers, but we'd love to help churches wrestle with the challenges of Acts 1 and mission at home AND to the ends of the earth.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Africa News in its new format – please feel free to let us have your feedback – and as you do, please pray the Lord will continue meet our financial needs. Cost are up, donations are down, and our vision is increasing as we see enquiries from Chinese and Indian believers alongside our more traditional countries appearing on our radar.

Serving Him together






**Tim Matthews**  
Mission Mobilising  
Director (CEO)

**Africa Inland Mission  
serves and partners with  
churches to fulfil the Great  
Commission and advance the  
gospel among Africans who  
have the least opportunity  
to hear about Jesus**

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**Africa Inland Mission is an evangelical Christian mission agency serving in over 20 African nations and around the world. Our passion is to see Christ-centred churches established and thriving among all of Africa’s peoples.**

# AFRICA'S CHURCH LEADERSHIP CRISIS

## HOW WILL GOD TRAIN AFRICA'S CHURCH LEADERS?

### A GROWING CHURCH

In 2018, for the first time, Africa became the continent with the most Christians – a staggering 631 million people.<sup>1</sup> This is only 45% of the continent's population though, and not all of these Christians would be considered evangelical or born again. But when considering the fact that each year the church in Africa is growing by 2.6%, while the rest of the world sees a decline of 0.4%<sup>2</sup>, this continent is a growing force when it comes to spreading the gospel.

### A GLOBAL INFLUENCE

Not only is the church in Africa growing, but it is also spreading across the world. Since 2010, eight of the ten fastest growing international migrant populations have been from sub-Saharan African nations. Already there are African churches firmly established in the US and, of the four largest megachurches in Great Britain, three of them are African led. It is incredible to see this growth when 130 years ago the number of Christians in Africa was estimated to be fewer than 10 million.<sup>2</sup>



### HUGE CONSEQUENCES

But the rapid growth of the church in Africa brings with it a problem. A problem highlighted by the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity and the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA), who have estimated that 85-90% of church leaders in Africa have little or no biblical training. When we think of the staggering number of Christians in Africa, as well as those who are now leading the churches across the rest of the world, there are serious implications for this lack of training. If poorly trained leaders cannot effectively disciple<sup>3</sup> their congregations or preach the gospel message, then the consequences will be far reaching, affecting the global church.



## HOPE AND EXCITEMENT

The solution sounds simple: receive a solid understanding of the Bible and doctrine through theological education. But for about 90% of church leaders in Africa, attending a university or college to study is impossible. There are alternatives though, such as grassroots training ministries found across the continent, bringing non-formal training to people where they serve. AIM has an exciting part to play in a range of theological education, so that the church in Africa – and by extension, the worldwide church – can grow and thrive. There's an abundance of opportunities for those with a passion for teaching God's Word. Might you have a part to play? For more info, get in touch.

*Notes: 1. In 2024 there are 734 million Christians estimated to live in Africa. 2. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Status of Global Christianity 2024. 3. Association of Evangelicals in Africa, Scaling Up Theological Education in Africa, (2020), p.3.*

*Each year  
the church  
in Africa  
grows, while  
the rest of the  
world sees a  
decline...*





# BIBLE TRAINING IN RURAL KENYA

INTERNATIONAL  
BIBLE TRAINING COLLEGE  
AND MART  
CHURCH OF ALL  
NATIONS

*B&E from AIM Hong Kong at the Northern Bible Training College.*

*Editor's note: I recently visited our workers in Marsabit County, northern Kenya who partner with the Africa Inland Church to deliver Tertiary Bible training to current and aspiring church leaders. When I asked the students what the main thing was they have learned through the course, they all answered that they "now understand they must not teach from a verse out of its context". That is so important but also reveals many of the challenges faced by the church and believers in regions that are lacking good biblical training and foundation.*

**Northern Kenya is a region predominantly inhabited by pastoralist communities marked by religious diversity, inter-ethnic tensions, and economic challenges. The unique needs of this region make theological education crucial for fostering both spiritual growth and socio-economic transformation.**

Theological education in northern Kenya provides a structured approach to religious understanding, enabling accurate interpretation of the scriptures, so students understand theological concepts and respond to the spiritual needs of their communities, shaping their worldviews and values.

The greatest challenge the churches face here is the lack of Bible training among many of their church leaders. Educated church leaders are better equipped to address theological questions, offer guidance on ethical dilemmas and intentionally disciple the next generation to preach the gospel.

Northern Kenya is home to various ethnic groups where competition for resources such as water and grazing land often leads to tension, cycles of violence and distrust. Alongside these stresses, Christianity, Islam and indigenous religious beliefs coexist, with Islam being predominant in the north



*One of the classes at the Northern Bible Training College.*

and Christianity widespread in parts of the south and among tribes like the Samburu and Rendille. Theological education helps religious leaders deepen their understanding of scripture, theology and religious practices so that they can become key agents of peace, help to foster interfaith dialogue, healing and reconciliation among ethnic groups and different religious communities, advocate for unity and peaceful resolutions in a region often plagued by tension and instability.

Furthermore, theological education contributes to community development. Church leaders are often trusted figures within their communities, and their influence extends beyond the pulpit to various social aspects. With theological training, church leaders are equipped to lead social initiatives, provide counsel on ethical matters, and promote values that are essential for community cohesion. Many churches are involved in running schools,

health clinics and social services in Marsabit, and theological education enhances church leaders' capacity to promote the well-being of their communities and contribute to the overall development of villages in the region.

In addition, young people in northern Kenya face significant challenges including limited educational opportunities, unemployment and exposure to extremist ideologies. Theological education provides an opportunity for youth empowerment, offering youth a means to engage with their faith, develop leadership skills, become active and capable of driving positive changes in their communities.

With an aim to establish Christ-centred churches among the nomads of Northern Kenya and meet these needs, theological education is indispensable. Not only for the spiritual growth of individuals but also for the broader well-being of the communities.

# HOPEFUL EXPECTATIONS

Marlene van Tonder has served with AIM in South Sudan since 2014 and by the time you read this will have returned to Torit from a long Home Assignment in New Zealand. Here she shares her thoughts five weeks before she again left home in obedience to the call to go.

Over the past eleven years of serving in South Sudan the routine of Home Assignment (HA) has become somewhat normalised. Returning home, reconnecting,

refreshing and refocusing, being part of the cycle of ministry. Then, at the end, the letting go. Once again making plans to depart, making plans for new and different, leaving behind loved ones, home comforts, and routines.

Amid this routine of coming and going, this latest season is slightly different for me. During this transition I am also preparing to receive a new team; Inbound Torit 2.0. A new group of workers, ready to step out in faith and wade into the harvest field. The joy of being

able to share this journey with them is something special. The first Torit Inbound team resulted in three new AIM workers working in South Sudan. It was a privilege to be a part of their individual journeys.

Usually, the end of HA is a logistically busy time. Packing, evaluating what to take and what to leave, and booking flights and accommodation. Alongside these are the things 'outside of my control' such as adequate support levels and medical clearance. These are the pieces of the puzzle that always seem to me like a final stamp of approval; God's open door to the road I am walking.

The end of this HA has seen me spending lots of time on video calls, writing emails, reviewing budgets, planning timelines and preparing curriculum. This is the stuff I love. I am so excited to have three new team members heading to Torit. Three new gospel workers ready to step out in faith and to see where the Lord will lead them. And I get front row seats!

So, as I prepare to go this time, I also prepare to receive. It makes the going easier, having that purpose. It makes the goodbyes less heart wrenching. It is a parting filled with hope. Hope for what the Lord will do through these new workers in a land in desperate need of godly men and women to help redeem the dark corners for God's glory.



*Marlene (bottom right), with members of Inbound 1.0*



# SHORT TERM PAIN

# FOR LONG TERM GAIN

In South Sudan, I had the privilege of teaching at the Torit Health Science Institute, training future midwives. I spent six months immersed in South Sudanese culture, living as a short-term missionary. I had the honour of sharing my faith alongside midwifery teaching, becoming involved with the student Christian group, a local AIC church and walking alongside several neighbours and friends, encouraging and challenging their faith. Sometimes it felt that what I was doing was a drop in the ocean, but I've come to understand that God uses each of us, no matter how insignificant we may feel, to carry out His mission. The gospel was such a radical lifeline for the grace and forgiveness it brought in a culture where people knew violence and conflict all too well.

Before coming to South Sudan, I heard it was one of the most dangerous and poor places in the world and didn't expect to find such rich community and joy. I didn't expect to revel in God's goodness and provision more than the lack and the grief surrounding me. I left with so much gratitude that instead of a season in my life that I thought would be defined by intense stress and violence it was nothing but joy in abundance and richness in relationships. I

experienced the blessing to be part of his global church as we seek to advance his kingdom.

I learned that being on mission requires us to enter the fullness of life and relationship in our "sent place" and give attention to how he will shape the mission as I put away my own expectations. God surprised me and I found myself involved in several other ministries including the local prison, orphanage, women's conferences, Christmas concerts, friendships at the market and even delivering some babies! **It is not about going to places of need to "fix" them. It is about joining God where He is already at work.** Listening, serving, and allowing Him to transform both the people we serve and ourselves. While I will never understand what it is like to live in a refugee camp, be an orphan, flee from a warzone there is so much we share on a human level as beloved children of God who all need salvation and grace, and

as we seek to be transformed to be more like Jesus each day.

Having returned home, I trust I am right where I need to be, and God has been preparing me for what is next. I would love to be involved in the work of God's global mission. I feel drawn back to South Sudan and possibly to spend more time working as a midwife at the local hospital, alongside the teaching role, as I absolutely love being with pregnant and birthing women. I am also interested in doing some bible college courses and ministry in my local church, so am praying into all of this.

When God called me to South Sudan I thought I'd have to suffer for it to be worth it for him. What a gift to be surprised by God in all the best ways. I learnt that God could graciously equip me along the way to be used for his glory and, as I trusted in him, he turned my fears into his strength.

*Julia Wilson*



*Julia with her midwifery students in Torit.*

## A CONFESSION

I'm the pastor of a local church and I have a confession to make: I've been living a double life. Not in the way you might think! I mean that there's a mismatch between what I believe and preach about God's global mission, and how central that mission is for our church.

The difficulty is that I studied at a mission-focused bible college (SMBC). I was trained for ministry by a former African missionary. My predecessor at Coast Bible Church had been a missionary in Hawaii (if that counts!). I can talk backwards and forwards about how God's heart for the world emerges across the biblical metanarrative.

So why is it so hard to keep that heartbeat as one of the driving rhythms of our church?

I wonder if you identify with me, whether as a pastor or member of a local church. The importance of reaching the unreached so quickly slips from our view. Sometimes I feel like my infant daughter, in that I'm still learning "object permanence" when it comes to cross-cultural mission! Its significance seems to vanish amidst the often urgent, sometimes important tasks in leading a church.

## A CONVICTION

But what I do know is that in Jesus' church, he sets the agenda. We don't need to come up with the marching orders. And not only that: he's promised to enable and strengthen us for every step along the way. That's the command and promise of Matthew 28. The risen Lord of every nation calls us to make disciples of every nation, and this same Lord will be with us till that mission is complete.

So the place of global mission in the local church is clear. When we know who Jesus is, and he gathers us as his people, we hear him call us outwards. The authority and worthiness of our Lord propel us to make him known everywhere – especially in places where his name has never been heard.

And when I lift my eyes again to this truth, I feel a steady thrum inside me. Perhaps it's the very heartbeat of God. A heartbeat not just for mission – but for worship. For people everywhere to glorify his Son. As one pastor puts it, "mission exists because worship doesn't."

How can I keep this heartbeat thrumming? And how can I keep nurturing it in my church?

## A CONNECTION

This is why our connection with missionaries and mission agencies is so important. If "object permanence" is one of my problems, the solution is sincere partnership with those on the frontline. I need their help to keep the vision front-and-centre.

This partnership is more than just sending money or reading out some prayer requests. I want to build genuine connections that enable our mission partners to serve but also expose our church to God's heartbeat for all nations.

Our partnership with AIM and others has certainly helped with that. Admittedly there is much more for me, and us, to learn. But we're on the way.

Every time I read about God saving someone on the other side of the world, my heart leaps. Just as it does when a mission partner shares about the person they're discipling, or the local pastor they're collaborating with. My heart stirs from its inward-looking nature when they share their struggles and prayer needs. But it's all worth it, they remind me, because there is still more worship that our Lord deserves.

So how will I stop living this double life, for myself and our church? As with many Christian things, the answer is genuine relationship. This is how the Lord has knit us together: some going, some sending, and growth happens both ways. I'm not just glad for that; I need that.

*Pastor Dan Kenny,*  
Coast Bible Church, Gosford.

## A PASTOR'S CONFESSION

*"The mark of a great church is not its seating capacity, but its sending capacity."*

*– Mike Stachura, Pastor, USA*

# OPPORTUNITIES IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

We have opportunities in Namibia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. These vary in length of service, as well as qualifications and experience required.

If you have a passion for theology, and a desire to help equip church leaders with the important training they need, do check them out.



To find out more call or send us a message  
<https://aimint.org/ap/go/ministry-interest-form/>

## LECTURER NAMIBIA



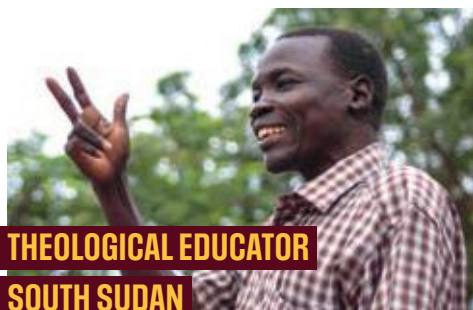
### LECTURER AT NAMIBIAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL (NETS), WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA

One of the only evangelical institutions in the country, NETS trains leaders of all ages from various denominations. Their vision is to equip church leaders and mobilise disciplers through teaching and personal discipleship.

**QUALIFICATIONS** Bachelors or Masters degree in Theology, teaching experience of a minimum 2+ years in a church or Bible school setting

**LANGUAGE** English, Dutch/Afrikaans (desirable, but can be learnt on assignment)

**LENGTH OF TERM** Minimum of 1 year



## THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR SOUTH SUDAN

### THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR IN TORIT, SOUTH SUDAN

The local church in this area recognises the need for biblical training among their leaders and workers. A facilitator is required to lead and coordinate Theological Education by Extension (TEE) courses in Torit and the surrounding areas.

**QUALIFICATIONS** Masters in Theology or Christian Ministry, training in school admin

**LANGUAGE** English. Teaching is in English, although Juba Arabic is the dominant trade language in church and town

**LENGTH OF TERM** Long term (3 – 10 years)



## UNIVERSITY LECTURER DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

### TEACHING AT SHALOM UNIVERSITY OR A CECA 20 BIBLE SCHOOL/INSTITUTE

Through Bible schools, Bible institutes, the Shalom University, and ongoing education, the local church desires to train leaders who will impact the church and society as they serve. There are various teaching positions available at Bible schools and Shalom University.

**QUALIFICATIONS** Degree in Theology or equivalent, discipleship and/or academic teaching experience

**LANGUAGE** French (required). Teaching is in French at SU, and Swahili or Lingala at Bible schools (local language will be learnt on assignment)

**LENGTH OF TERM** Short term (2 weeks) or long term (up to 12 years)

# FOCUS ON

# ALGERIA

## PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA

*By the people and for the people.*



## HISTORY

Algeria has been influenced and/or inhabited by numerous people groups including Phoenicians, Numidians, Romans, Vandals and Greeks. The early church has a long history in Algeria but from the 7th century there were waves of Arab Sunni Muslim migration, with the indigenous Berber/Amazigh peoples, some Christian, converting to Islam or being driven out and tragically wiping out the church.

More recently, Algeria had a period of French colonialism (1830-1662), a civil war (1991-2002), but Arab Sunni Islam has remained the dominant cultural influence, with Arabs comprising between 75-85% of the total population. Today there are about 100,000-200,000 Christians in Algeria.

## LANGUAGE

Modern Standard Arabic and Berber are the official languages of Algeria. Algerian Arabic (Darja) is the language used by most of the population. Although French is used in government, media and education, it has no official status but is the lingua franca (trade language) of Algeria. Algeria has one of the largest Francophone populations in the world.

## ALGIERS

Capital and largest city.



**ALGERIA**

## GEOGRAPHY

The south of Algeria is dominated by the Sahara Desert, while the north is fertile and more heavily populated. Algeria is the largest country by area on the African continent.

## CLIMATE

Hot all year during the day, but the nights are cool to chilly.





## NOTABLES

**Apuleius**, who wrote *The Golden Ass*, was born in the 2nd century in the Roman province of Numidia, in a Berber city, now called M'Daourouch, in Algeria.

**Augustine of Hippo** (354-430), early church father, who wrote *Confessions*, was a Berber who also lived in the Roman province of Numidia, now Algeria.

**Albert Camus** (1913/4-1960), who wrote *The Plague* was an Algerian-born French Nobel Prize writer.



## FOOD

Because of the mix of cultures over centuries, Algerian food is rich and diverse. Current influences are Arab, Berber, Turkish and French. Couscous is Algeria's national dish.

## PEOPLE GROUPS

Total number of People Groups

**38**

Total Number of Unengaged  
Unreached People Groups

**34**

Total population  
(99% Muslim)

**46,193,000**

Total unreached  
population (96.5%)

**46,159,000**

The largest people group is Arab (75-85%), followed by Amazigh/Berber (15-24%).

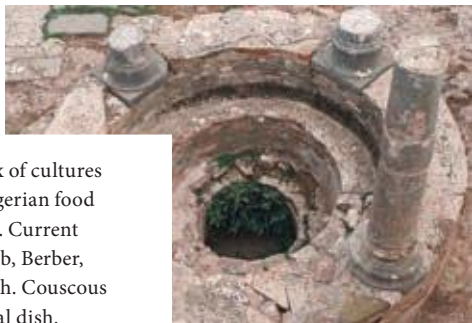
The largest group of Algerians outside Algeria is in France.

## PRAYER FOR ALGERIA

*The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the splendour of Carmel and Sharon; they will see the glory of the Lord, the splendour of our God. (Isaiah 35:1-2)*

We are increasing our prayer focus on Algeria in 2025, building on the faithful efforts of many who have already sowed time and service into covering the land with prayer. Please join us in prayer as we charge onward and upward to see more labourers in the harvest among the country's 46,159,000 unreached.

*Sources: Wikipedia, Joshua Project*



# CHALLENGES IN A CLOSED NATION

*Editor's note: yes, we're heading towards Easter, not Christmas, but a similar piece could be written for Easter.*

**In our corner of North Africa the 25th of December is just another working day. There are no decorations (except in the fanciest tourist hotels), no traditional foods in the shops, and certainly no public holidays! It can be a challenge to be away from your passport country during these meaningful holidays, and of course we miss celebrating with friends and family, and our home church.**

But the positive of being so far away from home at this time is we are removed from the advertising, the excess, the busyness, and all the aspects of the season that distract from its real meaning. This year we really appreciated the opportunity we have here, isolated from those influences. We were able to focus on the wonderful true story of Immanuel and take time to enjoy the lyrics of the Christmas carols.

We pondered the Christmas story here as a group over several weeks, and as we watched a nativity movie with a seeker, I was struck by the distinction between those people in the story who had faith and those who didn't. Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, the magi, Simeon and Anna – they all had faith to follow the path that God gave them, even if it seemed crazy, and they were rewarded with the joy of seeing the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. But Herod and the religious leaders of the day, despite having access to all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, hardened their hearts and chose not to believe.

Over the last year we have met and heard about local people in our region who are open and who are starting to follow the path that God has for them. Some are studying the Bible, and some are asking questions of us on social media.

Another thing that stood out to me in the story is the number of times that dreams and visions are mentioned. While this might seem

strange from our perspective, it is well known that people in this part of the world often see visions and have dreams of a man in white. One local pastor, from a Muslim background, told us that in his experience most people who persevere to the point of becoming believers have had a vision or dream where they encountered the risen Lord Jesus.

So, this year we are asking that many here would have dreams and visions of this kind, inviting them into fellowship with the Lord. We would love them to have their eyes opened to see the True King and for a local church to start here in this city. And as a group we are asking for the Lord's name to be honoured here, for God's will to be done in the city as it is in heaven, and for many opportunities for good conversations with our friends, neighbours and clients. May December 25th become a special day for many people in this region.

**T&L in North Africa**

# HOW TO EFFECTIVELY EVANGELISE AND DISCIPLE IN NORTH AFRICA

## ...AND HERE AT HOME!

### 1 – COMMITTING TO PRAYER

You need to create time to really seek the face of God in prayer for your converts until Christ is formed in them.

### 2 – FOLLOW-UP

You need very close and persistent follow-up. Perseverance and patience are vital.

### 3 – BIBLE TEACHING

As a Christian worker, one must have a good understanding of the Scriptures and the ability to teach the new convert the fundamental things of the Christian faith.

### 4 – A SAFE SPACE

You need to create or find a conducive environment where the new converts can meet with you without fear.

### 5 – PRAYER LIFE

Most Muslim converts find it difficult to adjust to the Christian ways of praying: you need to help them by praying together regularly. This helps them not only develop their prayer life but grow in their confidence in the promises of God. They need courage to overcome the fear of persecution and wisdom to share their faith.

### IMMENSE JOY

There's a great joy in leading a soul to Christ, seeing them grow and become well established in the faith. There's a peace of knowing that there is an eternal reward waiting for them. There's the utmost satisfaction doing the will of God, knowing that he desires for all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.



# NEVER WASTED

IN MARK 14 A WOMAN BROKE A COSTLY JAR OF PERFUME, WORTH \$70,000 TODAY, AND POURED IT ON JESUS' HEAD, JUST DAYS BEFORE HIS CRUCIFIXION. THOSE AROUND HER WERE INDIGNANT, CALLING IT A WASTE. YET JESUS SAW THE BEAUTY AND VALUE IN HER SACRIFICIAL OFFERING. UNLIKE THE WOMEN WHO LATER VISITED JESUS' TOMB, SHE ANOINTED HIM BEFOREHAND, PREPARING HIM FOR HIS DEATH.

WHEN JESUS RETURNS, EVERY KNEE WILL BOW TO HIM, BUT HOW MUCH MORE PRECIOUS IS IT TO BOW DOWN AND ANOINT HIS FEET NOW? NOT WITH PERFUME, BUT WITH OUR LIVES, READY TO SURRENDER EVERYTHING.

GIVE TODAY AND HELP OTHERS COME TO KNOW THE JOY OF LIVING FOR JESUS



**AIMINT.ORG/AP/DONATE**

**SHE HAS  
DONE A  
BEAUTIFUL  
THING**

**SHE DID  
WHAT SHE  
COULD**

**MARK  
14:6,8**

## Partnering with churches • Reaching Africa's unreached

*Africa Inland Mission serves and partners with churches to fulfil the Great Commission and advance the gospel among Africans who have the least opportunity to hear about Jesus.*

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