

The Christ for Humanity Newsletter

THE **CFH** CHRONICLES

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CFH **GLOBAL MISSIONS**: Ministry in a "Closed" Country

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preparing to go!

(Specific names and places have been withheld to protect the safety of our missionary hosts and future CFH mission teams)

For weeks, even months, anticipation had been growing. Now the day had finally arrived! Twenty-three mission team members from 12 different states converged on Christ for Humanity's headquarters in Tulsa to begin three days of cross-cultural training before departing for North Africa. The preceding months were filled with phone calls of encouragement and assurance, masses of precautionary paperwork, and hours upon hours of prayer. The team came to the mission field primarily from healthcare backgrounds (registered nurses, pre-med, medical and nursing students), though a few were not connected to the medical field. Each short-term missionary had different tales to tell of ways God amazingly provided all the funds necessary to go to North Africa. However, all team members had one thing in common – a passion for rubbing shoulders with the persecuted Church and reaching the Muslim world.

I had not seen our in-country missionary family and personal friends in more than 3 years. How I looked forward to the opportunity of speaking with them freely, greeting their children, and simply hugging their necks! Planning the North Africa mission trip took 12 months because taking a Christian group into a "closed" Muslim country wasn't going to be easy. "Closed" means it is illegal to openly declare Christ within the country. Think back to the former Soviet Union before 1990, and you begin to understand the kind of repression Christians in the Middle East face: Wire taps, visits from secret police, torture and even death are commonplace. For this reason all communication between CFH and our in-country hosts (phone or e-mail) had to be encoded in the off-chance "Big Brother" might be present. Making plans under these conditions was difficult. Yet, in spite of all the seeming difficulties, a growing excitement was palpable on both sides of the globe, for God was bringing this team together for His glory. None of us imagined the impact and profound change this mission would affect in our lives and in the lives of our missionary brothers and sisters.

PLACING OUR FAITH IN GOD: The day before team members were due to arrive in Tulsa, CFH's missionary contact (HK) in North Africa e-mailed that a "Judas" was present within the underground church. This news was very troubling. Not only could a traitor jeopardize the safety of

our missionary hosts, but CFH now had to make a quick decision about taking a team into the country. After bathing the situation in prayer and discussing various options with the CFH staff and Governing Board, the decision was made to call our missionary contact and let him talk to the entire team. On July 1st with everyone assembled in Christ for Humanity's theater, the team leaders related the recent development in the mission country, allowing anyone uncomfortable with the situation to cancel. After the conference call with HK, the entire mission team felt confident that trip arrangements, so carefully planned over the past year, would keep them away from the conflict. Our group would be able to fulfill its mission in the country even if HK and his family were evacuated or, even worse, imprisoned. As much as this turn of events grieved our hearts, we knew God still had a plan for our mission. Though team safety had not been jeopardized, the life of our missionary family became even more precious to us in these moments.

During the next two days, team members continued to train and prepare for life in a Muslim country. Each day began in the Word and corporate worship. Our prayer life grew exponentially as we continually lifted-up one another before the Lord and prayed for our brothers and sisters in North Africa. After morning devotions, an intense time of training began – from discussions of international travel to cross-cultural customs and mannerisms. Training touched on ways Americans could remain safe abroad (CFH mission leadership is trained and certified in Crisis Management, CPR, and first aid). Very little time was spent discussing how to evangelize Muslims, as the first few days in North Africa were slated for in-depth instruction by former Muslims. The training session ended with a “commission”: to make the name of Christ famous in North Africa.

themomentisnow!

After 24 hours of travel, our plane landed, and team members, no matter how tired, supernaturally became awake. Wide-eyed, we exited the airplane and were engulfed in desert heat and Middle Eastern aromas. No, Toto, we definitely are not in Oklahoma anymore!

CFH “custom clearance training” was immediately put to the test. Our missionary contact had suggested some preliminary guidelines for the team on how to answer questions posed by customs officials: basically, speak very quickly with a strong accent. HK also hired a bilingual man to pass through customs with us in the event of a problem. And brother, were there problems!

First, some of our luggage was missing, but that issue seemed minor compared with the matter of the CPR “manikins” packed in our bags. Due to the encoded communications with our host missionary before the trip, I misinterpreted the number of manikins allowable. Now I realized we were in big trouble if the Lord didn't intervene!

For 4 hours our team flashed medical licenses and “fast talked” its way through several custom officers. We presented letters of invitation and in-country requests to bring medical equipment and supplies. How gracious God was! Our missionary contact nearly fell out of his seat when he realized we got all 15 manikins into the country. He rejoiced, “I cannot believe my eyes; your success had to be the Lord!!!”

Our first few days in-country were filled with cultural tourism and intense training in the beliefs of Islam. Before we could effectively initiate clinics and relationship evangelism, we needed to

understand the people we were trying to reach. Converted Muslims drilled our team for hours on the best methods of reaching Muslims with the Gospel. The training was incredible!

In a “closed” country, approaching someone with the Gospel is illegal; however, it is not illegal to discuss ones faith if questioned by a native. This type of ministry is called “Relationship Evangelism.” Team methodology was to walk around the city, looking for students who could speak English. When someone showed interest in talking with Americans, our team would make an appointment to meet with them again at a later date. We found that during subsequent visits, conversations began to go beyond culture issues into the hard questions of faith. Team members were able to share the entire Gospel message with several Muslims. It was amazing to see the hand of God directing our steps.

The medical team set up clinics in a place call “trash city.” This area is known in-country as the home for society’s outcast. The dirt roads we walked were covered in soiled trash with pigs literally eating around our feet. We entered the schools there and examined children for lice and other medical problems resulting from poverty. Our medical and nursing students got a full dose of clinical practice in this terrible place. All of us found ourselves hugging and loving on the most untouchables of society. God graced our team to love the unlovable for His glory!

My husband Joel, the only doctor on the trip, reminded everyone of **II Corinthians 2:15**: “*For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing . . .*” In a place forsaken by society, God in His mercy allowed us to reflect His glory in Word and Deed.

torturedforchrist

There is no religious tolerance within Islam. Peaceful co-existence between Muslims and other faiths rarely occurs. Non-believers or infidels must convert or be destroyed. For a person born into Islam to deny Allah is a very serious matter.

Our first encounter with a Muslim Background Believer (MBB) was on our 5th day in-country. We met in the most secure room we could find, praying no one would see the MBB enter. Tension was so high that when the doorbell rang during his visit, everyone in the room held his breath. When we discovered a fellow believer at the door, an audible sigh of relief filled the room.



Brother A (MMB’s never use their proper names) was a short man, probably in his late 40’s. He did not speak English so his story unfolded through an interpreter. *Brother A*’s testimony was heart wrenching. After converting to Christianity from Islam, he was thrown into prison. His captors took an iron bar, held it over fire until it was glowing hot, and then pressed it to *Brother A*’s body, asking, “Do you still want to be a Christian?” When *Brother A* cried, “Yes,” his captors repeated the torture over and over again. *Brother A* lifted the hem of his pants, revealing a leg burned beyond recognition during his imprisonment. For modesty sake, he refused to show us the other burned areas of his body.

Brother A would not consider himself a hero of the faith. He saw himself as a simple man in

love with Jesus Christ. His humility was stunning, and his passion to reach the Muslim world was incredible. Persecutions hadn't kept *Brother A* from being bold in his faith. God's grace through the experience stirred him to a greater love for those who held him captive.

Another MBB we met was *Mother L*, a tiny 70 year-old woman only 5 feet tall. By her stature you would never imagine that she was head of one of the most high profile missions in the underground church today. *Mother L* helps new Christian converts from Muslim backgrounds escape the country when their families or communities try to kill them. She also counsels young girls who are seeking abortions to put their babies up for adoption. Surprisingly, adoption is highly illegal in most Islamic countries. If *Mother L* were caught helping arrange an adoption, she would receive death by hanging.



When *Mother L* was talking to our group, I offered for her my chair. "Please *Mother L*, it is our honor to have you here. We consider you a great hero of the faith." She then said, "I am no hero; I just a mama." Again, humility clothed a great hero in Christ. *Mother L* considers her life as nothing. She lives for what she can do for her great Savior.



When *Brother M* was first converted, he said that he waited fearfully for the authorities to take him to prison. Prison is a normal occurrence for MMB's. But persecution goes beyond imprisonment. *Brother M* tried to register his 6 year-old daughter at 13 schools, only to be turned away because she was being raised as "Christian." Converts to Christianity stand little hope of educating their children. Don't expect to get a good job, either. These are but a few of the testimonies we heard from members of the underground church.

Our persecuted brothers and sisters in the faith are just like you and me in many ways. They look like normal people and want normal things: a job to provide for their families, education for their children, and freedom to serve Christ. But their expression of worship is different. We worship in freedom by singing songs and lifting hands in a congregation. They worship by keeping the faith while lying in jail cells and being tortured.

Pray for *Brother A*, *Brother M*, and *Mother L*. But not for them only but for all of the hero's in the faith that are serving Christ in North Africa and the Middle East.

Quotes:

At some point risk doesn't matter anymore; you just have to follow the call!"

Believer in North Africa lead to reach the Middle East

"I will not negotiate Christ."

MBB to his mother when she fell crying at his feet, begging him to convert back to Islam

"The best way to reach a Muslims is through love."

MBB in North Africa

"The government thought throwing us into prison and torturing us would deter us from proclaiming the Truth of Jesus Christ. But instead of making us quiet, persecution made us more zealous to share. We had now faced our worst fears and realized all they could take from us was our life."

MBB in North Africa

“When I proposed to my fiancé, I told her everyday I would be faithful to make a honeymoon, but she must not be sad if tomorrow she will become a widow because of our call to the Middle East.”

Believer in North Africa called to reach the Middle East

“I felt as if we were walking the pages of the book “Jesus Freaks”

Justin Tucker, Burleson, TX student missionary with CFH

Facts:

***1 in every 5 people in the world is a Muslim Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world
Muslims are the largest bloc of unreached people in the world It is estimated that there are 6-7
million Middle Eastern Muslims in the USA***

SUMMER VBS PROGRAMS AID MINISTRY FOOD PROGRAM

Vacation Bible School coordinators at Fellowship Bible Church and Christ Presbyterian Church in Tulsa focused some program attention on helping local ministries meet the needs of area poor. Children attending VBS at these two churches collected nearly 3,000 lbs. of canned goods for Christ for Humanity to help feed hungry Tulsans. What an incredible and unexpected blessing!



Christ for Humanity provides over 650 boxes of food each month through its emergency food pantry and through outreaches at 9 Tulsa Housing Authority Facilities. Nearly all of the food CFH distributes comes from the Tulsa Community Food Bank (TCFB). For many years the food bank provided a wide range of staple items from which feeding ministries could choose – at times including frozen meat. However, during the past year or so, surplus food received by TCFB for distribution in Northeast Oklahoma has been limited.

This means that Christ for Humanity food boxes have lacked the depth and variety they once supplied. Can you imagine how blessed those receiving CFH food boxes in August and September were with the addition of the various canned good collected by the children attending VBS!

Vacation Bible School is a nurturing setting for the burgeoning faith of children. For many unchurched boys and girls attending with friends, VBS represents a first encounter with Christ. What better way to drive home the love of God than to involve children in the process of emulating His Son. Jesus met the physical needs of people while ministering to them spiritually. By providing food to feed the poor, the children who attended two VBS programs experienced the joy of servanthood. These first steps in following Christ’s example can lead to a lifetime of interest in seeing people brought into God’s Kingdom. How grateful the ministry is to have been chosen by these churches as a vehicle making Christ real in the lives of area children.

HOW YOU CAN HELP MAINTAIN THE FINANCIAL HEALTH OF CFH

Ministries like Christ for Humanity are constantly struggling to make ends meet. Below are just

a few ideas for helping CFH fund its current programs and continue to serve Christ at home and around the world.

- **Give monthly to support CFH local and international ministry projects.**
- **Support CFH fundraising events.**

The ministry has 3 fundraisers scheduled during the next 8 months:

1. **CFH Skate-a-Thon** – Sponsor elementary age children in this two-hour roller skating event – November 7, 2004.
2. **Christmas Ham Drive** – Fund the purchase of 650 / 5lb. boneless hams (approximately \$6 each) as a special addition to the ministry Christmas food boxes – November 21st – December 5th.
3. **Feinstein Foundation Challenge** – Collect canned food for a CFH food drive, and help the ministry receive a portion of \$1 million from the Feinstein Foundation to help fight hunger – March and April, 2005.

- **If the company for which you work requires employee participation in its United Way program, designate CFH to receive your charitable gift.**
- **In lieu of flowers for departed loved ones, ask friends and relatives to make memorial gifts to CFH.**
- **Donate property or goods to the ministry for a tax deduction with the understanding that your gift may be sold to advance the Gospel of Christ. In the past CFH has been gifted with cemetery plots and time-shares.**
- **Make CFH the beneficiary of a Charitable Remainder Trust.**

FOCUS ON HALLOWEEN: Why Many Christian Parents are Opting Out

Did you know that Halloween is the second largest commercial holiday in America after Christmas? Surprisingly, Americans spend an estimated \$6.9 billion annually on costumes, decorations, food, parties, and of course candy; however, most people don't really know what they are celebrating – only that Halloween is a tradition that children enjoy.

Halloween's roots can be traced back more than 2000 to the Celtic festival of Samhain, celebrated in Ireland, the United Kingdom, and northern France. For the Celts November 1st marked the end of summer and harvest and the beginning of the cold, dark winter associated with death. On the evening of October 31st (Samhain), the Celts believed ghosts of the dead returned to earth to cause trouble and ruin crops. However, Druid priests were able to communicate with these otherworldly spirits and make predictions about the future. The resulting prophecies were important to people steeped in superstition. During Samhain, Druids made huge, sacred bonfires where the Celts gathered to sacrifice to their deities – usually crops or animal offerings. The Celts wore costumes, animal skins and heads, to this event and attempted to tell each other's fortunes. When the festival was over, celebrants took embers from the sacred bonfire to re-light their home hearths, hoping for protection during the long winter months.

By A.D. 43 Rome had conquered most of the Celtic lands, and two of its festivals were combined with Samhain to make the rituals more acceptable to the Empire. Then in the seventh century, the Catholic Church endeavored to replace the hybridized Celtic/Roman holiday with a similar church-sanctioned celebration. Over the centuries, superstition and the fear lead people to wear masks,

leaving their homes after dark on All-hallows Eve (later called Halloween) in the hope that ghosts would mistake them for fellow spirits. People also placed bowls of food outside to keep the spirits from mischief and away from their homes. The practice of “Trick-or-Treat” originated in England when the poor would beg for “soul cakes” and promise to pray for the spirit of the dead. This activity was eventually replaced by children visiting neighbor homes for food, ale or money. All-hallows Eve included many Samhain’s traditions: building bonfires, parading through the streets, and wearing costumes of saints, angels, devils and witches.

Not until the second half of the nineteenth century was Halloween widely practiced in America. Millions of Irish, fleeing the potato famine of 1846, immigrated to this country. Irish Halloween traditions, combined with those from England, were popularized throughout America, over the years becoming America’s present billion dollar industry.

Halloween’s traditions are rooted in Celtic pagan practices, tweak by each successive culture to meet the needs of superstitious people. Many Christian parents, not wanting their children involved in activities based upon fear and spiritualism, are opting to participate in fall carnivals at area churches. These events encourage children to enjoy a bit of fantasy and fun apart from the Satanic overtones evident in Halloween’s true origins.

Psalm 23

The 23rd Psalm is one of the most quoted passages of Scripture. The analysis below sheds a wonderful light on the meaning of the verses in the life of Christians.

The Lord is my shepherd, (Relationship)
 I shall not want. (Supply)
 He makes me lie down in green pastures; (Rest)
 He leads me beside quiet waters. (Refreshment)
 He restores my soul; (Healing)
 He guides me in the paths of righteousness (Guidance)
 For His name’s sake. (Purpose)
 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 (Testing)
 I fear no evil; (Protection)
 For Thou art with me; (Faithfulness)
 Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. (Discipline)
 Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; (Hope)
 Thou hast anointed my head with oil; (Consecration)
 My cup overflows. (Abundance)
 Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, (Blessing)
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord (Security)
 Forever. (Eternity)

