



Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization

The Whole Church taking the Whole Gospel to the Whole World

UNDERSTANDING MUSLIMS

Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 49

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In Pattaya, Thailand, September 29 to October 5, 2004

"A New Vision, a New Heart, a Renewed Call"

In encouraging the publication and study of the Occasional Papers, the
Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization does not necessarily
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This Issue Group on Understanding Muslims was Issue Group No.20
(there were 31 Issue Groups at the Forum)

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LOP 30): David Claydon

This Occasional Paper is a summary only.
The fuller report is still in progress and will appear on the internet in due
course.

Fifty members participated in Issue Group 20 on "Understanding
Muslims." They were a highly diverse group, from all over the world. This
report was prepared on behalf of this team. Since many team members
prefer that their names not be published for security reasons, no
individual names are given in this report.

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The context for the production of the Lausanne Occasional Papers

The Lausanne Movement is an international movement committed to energising

“the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.”

With roots going back to the historical conferences in Edinburgh (1910) and Berlin (1966), the Lausanne Movement was born out of the First International Congress on World Evangelization called by evangelist Billy Graham held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in July 1974. The landmark outcome of this Congress was the **Lausanne Covenant** supported by the 2,430 participants from 150 nations. The covenant proclaims the substance of the Christian faith as historically declared in the creeds and adds a clear missional dimension to our faith. Many activities have emerged from the Lausanne Congress and from the second congress held in Manila in 1989. The Covenant (in a number of languages), and details about the many regional events and specialised conferences which have been undertaken in the name of Lausanne, may be examined online at www.lausanne.org.

The Lausanne International Committee believed it was led by the Holy Spirit to hold another conference which would bring together Christian leaders from around the world. This time the Committee planned to have younger emerging leaders involved and sought funds to enable it to bring a significant contingent from those parts of the world where the church is rapidly growing today. It decided to call the conference a **Forum**. As a Forum its structure would allow people to come and participate if they had something to contribute to one of 31 issues (around which were formed Issue Groups). These issues were chosen through a global research programme seeking to identify the most significant issues in the world today which are of concern in our task to take the *good news* to the world.

This Lausanne Occasional Paper (LOP) is the report that has emerged from one of these Issue Groups. LOPs have been produced for each of the Issue Groups and information on these and other publications may be obtained online at www.lausanne.org.

The theme of the Forum for World Evangelization held in 2004 was **“A new vision, a new heart, a renewed call.”** This Forum was held in Pattaya, Thailand from September 29 to October 5, 2004. 1,530 participants came from 130 countries to work in one of the 31 Issue Groups.

The Affirmations at the conclusion of the Forum stated:

“There has been a spirit of working together in serious dialogue and prayerful reflection. Representatives from a wide spectrum of cultures and virtually all parts of the world have come

together to learn from one another and to seek new direction from the Holy Spirit for world evangelization. They committed themselves to joint action under divine guidance.

The dramatic change in the political and economic landscape in recent years has raised new challenges in evangelization for the church. The polarization between east and west makes it imperative that the church seek God's direction for the appropriate responses to the present challenges.

In the 31 Issue Groups these new realities were taken into consideration, including the HIV pandemic, terrorism, globalization, the global role of media, poverty, persecution of Christians, fragmented families, political and religious nationalism, post-modern mind set, oppression of children, urbanization, neglect of the disabled and others.

Great progress was made in these groups as they grappled for solutions to the key challenges of world evangelization. As these groups focused on making specific recommendations, larger strategic themes came to the forefront.

There was affirmation that major efforts of the church must be directed toward those who have no access to the gospel. The commitment to help establish self sustaining churches within 6,000 remaining unreached people groups remains a central priority.

Secondly, the words of our Lord call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this we have failed greatly. We renew our commitment to reach out in love and compassion to those who are marginalised because of disabilities or who have different lifestyles and spiritual perspectives. We commit to reach out to children and young people who constitute a majority of the world's population, many of whom are being abused, forced into slavery, armies and child labour.

A third stream of a strategic nature acknowledges that the growth of the church is now accelerating outside of the western world. Through the participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America, we recognise the dynamic nature and rapid growth of the church in the *South*. Church leaders from the *South* are increasingly providing exemplary leadership in world evangelization.

Fourthly, we acknowledge the reality that much of the world is made up of oral learners who understand best when information comes to them by means of stories. A large proportion of the world's populations are either unable to or unwilling to absorb information through written communications. Therefore, a need exists to share the "Good News" and to disciple new Christians in story form and parables.

Fifthly, we call on the church to use media to effectively engage the culture in ways that draw non-believers toward spiritual truth and to proclaim Jesus Christ in culturally relevant ways.

Finally, we affirm the priesthood of all believers and call on the church to equip, encourage and empower women, men and youth to fulfil their calling as witnesses and co-labourers in the world wide task of evangelization.

Transformation was a theme which emerged from the working groups. We acknowledge our own need to be continually transformed, to continue to open ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the challenges of God's word and to grow in Christ together with fellow Christians in ways that result in social and economic transformation. We acknowledge that the scope of the gospel and building the Kingdom of God involves, body, mind, soul and spirit. Therefore we call for increasing integration of service to society and proclamation of the gospel.

We pray for those around the world who are being persecuted for their faith and for those who live in constant fear of their lives. We uphold our brothers and sisters who are suffering. We recognize that the reality of the persecuted church needs to be increasingly on the agenda of the whole Body of Christ. At the same time, we also acknowledge the importance of loving and doing good to our enemies while we fight for the right of freedom of conscience everywhere.

We are deeply moved by the onslaught of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – the greatest human emergency in history. The Lausanne movement calls all churches everywhere to prayer and holistic response to this plague.

"9/11," the war in Iraq, the war on terror and its reprisals compel us to state that we must not allow the gospel or the Christian faith to be captive to any one geo-political entity. We affirm that the Christian faith is above all political entities.

We are concerned and mourn the death and destruction caused by all conflicts, terrorism and war. We call for Christians to pray for peace, to be proactively involved in reconciliation and avoid all attempts to turn any conflict into a religious war. Christian mission in this context lies in becoming peacemakers.

We pray for peace and reconciliation and God's guidance in how to bring about peace through our work of evangelization. We pray for God to work in the affairs of nations to open doors of opportunity for the gospel. We call on the church to mobilize every believer to focus specific consistent prayer for the evangelization of their communities and the world.

In this Forum we have experienced the partnership of men and women working together. We call on the church around the world to work towards full partnership of men and women in the work of world evangelism by maximising the gifts of all.

We also recognize the need for greater intentionality in developing future leaders. We call on the church to find creative ways to release emerging leaders to serve effectively."

Numerous practical recommendations for local churches to consider were offered. These will be available on the Lausanne website and in the Lausanne Occasional Papers. It is our prayer that these many case studies and action plans will be used of God to mobilise the church to share a clear and relevant message using a variety of methods to reach the most neglected or resistant groups so that everyone will have the opportunity to hear the gospel message and be able to respond to this good news in faith.

We express our gratitude to the Thai Church which has hosted us and to their welcoming presentation to the Forum. We are profoundly gratefully to God for the privilege of being able to gather here from the four corners of the earth. We have developed new partnerships, made new friends and encouraged one another in our various ministries. Notwithstanding the resistance to the gospel in many places and the richness of an inherited religious and cultural tradition we here at the Forum have accepted afresh the renewed call to be obedient to the mandate of Christ. We commit ourselves to making His saving love known so that the whole world may have opportunity to accept God's gift of salvation through Christ."

These affirmations indicate the response of the participants to the Forum outcomes and their longing that the whole church may be motivated by the outcomes of the Forum to strengthen its determination to be obedient to God's calling.

May the case studies and the practical suggestions in this and the other LOPs be of great help to you and your church as you seek to find new ways and a renewed call to proclaim the saving love of Jesus Christ

David Claydon

CONTENTS

1. Introduction: Changing Contexts
2. A New Heart
3. A New Vision
4. Five Areas of Action
 - 4.1 Training (including theological education)
 - 4.2 Mobilizing Christians, congregations and agencies for reaching Muslims
 - 4.3 Overcoming Barriers and Threats to Mission
 - 4.4 Caring for Muslim Background Believers
 - 4.5 Contextualization
5. Regional Concerns
 - 5.1 South East Asia
 - 5.2 South Asia
 - 5.3 The Middle East and North Africa
 - 5.4 Sub-Sahara Africa
 - 5.5 The West / North (the lands of immigration)
6. A Renewed Call

1. INTRODUCTION: CHANGING CONTEXTS

In 1978 the Glen Eyrie Report (Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 4) had probing questions to consider concerning missions to Muslims. The health of missions to Muslims was not encouraging. There was a sense that the Church had made many mistakes in taking the gospel to Muslims. Why was the Christian world committing such limited resources to this vital work? Why were Islam and Muslims so poorly understood? Why were the methods used to communicate the gospel to Muslims so inappropriate and ineffective? At that time there was little information available on how Muslims come to Christ, and how the faith responses of individual Muslims are best nurtured into worshipping fellowships, and then into larger movements.

In thirty years the world has changed greatly and so has gospel witness to Muslims. On the one hand, there is an unprecedented response among many Muslims to the gospel. On the other, the challenge of witnessing to Muslims has become increasingly pressing for the whole church and the challenge of reaching the Muslim world for Christ remains a vast one.

Evolving methodologies

All over the world, innovative forms of witnessing to and discipling Muslims are developing which are seeing greatly increased fruitfulness. There are movements of Muslims to Christ numbering in the thousands, in diverse parts of the world, including regions which have been almost exclusively Islamic for centuries.

One key to the emerging harvest has been contextualization: making the gospel at home in each distinct culture, rather than importing models of church and culture which were alien and imposed from outside. There is also a greater understanding today than ever before of how Muslims turn to faith in Christ. A further factor in this new fruitfulness is our growing understanding of the specific needs of Muslim background believers for care and discipleship after they accept Christ.

The impact of mass migration

As we survey the current vast surge of Muslim migrations across the world, the Body of Christ has entered an era, unprecedented in world history, where the majority of Christians and Christian congregations find themselves in communities which include Muslims. Living as neighbours with Muslims has been the experience of Christians in the Middle East for centuries: it is now the norm for the world church. For Christians all over the world, Muslims are not only 'over there', confined to hard-to-reach people groups: they are our near neighbours. Thus understanding and relating to Muslims has become a pressing necessity for congregations from Stockholm to Sydney and from Seoul to Cape Town.

Growth in indigenous outreach to Muslims

Churches which lived long under Islamic law were conditioned not to evangelize Muslims, for to do so would threaten their tolerated status under the Shariah. During the period of Western colonialism, when some of these restrictions were relaxed, those who undertook gospel witness to

Muslims were often seen as outsiders to the cultures they were attempting to reach. However, in recent decades many gospel communities have been developing in Muslim contexts, with their own indigenous leadership. This is transforming the character of Christian mission to Muslims.

The Islamic Movement and Islamic Dawah

The Islamic Movement is a world-wide trend to revitalize the faith of Muslims and the strength of Islam. One expression of this has been a movement towards greater Shariah adherence which can be observed in many Muslim nations.

The program of Islamic revival includes a vigorous commitment to dawah (Islamic proclamation) to non-Muslims. The resources and effort going into this movement are considerable. The numbers of converts to Islam is consequently rising, including thousands in what were formerly Christian lands. This serves as a reminder that of all religions, Islam has been the one to effectively supplant Christianity in former Christian territories. The movement of Christians into Islam, long familiar to churches living under Shariah conditions, is becoming a significant challenge for the whole church.

The Crisis of Islamism

Whilst the Islamic movement has been gaining momentum for decades, we are also entering into a period of disillusionment with its effects in Muslim societies. Iran has been a case study of an Islamic revolution, ushered in with enthusiastic idealism, but which is now producing cynicism towards Islamist ideals among the next generation. This is producing unprecedented opportunities for the gospel.

Movements to Deeper Understanding

There is a climate of confusion about Islam. As the public profile of Islam and Muslims is rising, there is a growing interest and openness in the church to know about Islam and to understand Muslims better. This is awakening the desires of many Christians to develop relationships and share their faith with Muslims. This provides many exciting opportunities for progress in reaching Muslims with the gospel.

New ways to overcome barriers

Many developments which took place in the twentieth century make it far easier for Muslims to hear the gospel than at any time in the past. These include the impact of mass media, including radio, television and the internet; the massive movements of peoples in response to national disasters with international mobilization to support them; mass migrations out of Muslim lands; and widespread cultural and educational exchanges through the movement of students and workers around the world.

2. A NEW HEART

It is the right of every individual Muslim and every Muslim community to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. The world-wide church cannot and must not put off the task of sharing the gospel with Muslims. The commitment which the love of Christ calls us to is to communicate our faith clearly and appropriately, in the context of genuine and life-giving relationships. Whether it is the far-off unreached people group, or the Muslim family which lives just down the road: all need to hear the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We call upon church leaders, intercessors, visionaries and ordinary Christians everywhere to place Muslim men or women, boys and girls, in the centre of their focus of their passion for the lost.

A New Heart in the West

As part of the post-modern trend, a cloud of confusion, suspicion and even aversion now inhibits mission in the Western world. This has brought a loss of confidence in the gospel. Yet mission history is church history, forming the bedrock of Christian identity. The church in the West needs to take confidence and find inspiration to re-affirm mission. Its effectiveness in reaching Muslims for Christ will depend upon its willingness to take up the missionary calling of the whole church to the whole world.

A Stronger Heart for the non-Western World

The church in the non-Western world is already achieving successes in reaching Muslims with the gospel. However, it needs to be challenged to make Muslim evangelism a higher priority. It is time for renewed courage in the face of all the challenges that this great task will bring.

3. A NEW VISION

This is a time for the whole church to expect great things of the Holy Spirit in reaching Muslims for Christ. We call the church to informed and intensive prayer for Muslims the world over, and to pray also for those who are being called by Christ to minister among Muslims.

We seek breakthroughs in the systems that are holding Muslims in spiritual bondage. We pray for the freedom of ordinary Muslims, many of whom want to follow Christ, but are held back through fear. There are countless testimonies of Muslim men and women, boys and girls, coming to Christ through dreams and visions. God is His own chief evangelist and the Holy Spirit does not need a visa or permit to work in Muslim lives. The world-wide church needs to seek and receive the confidence to partner with the Holy Spirit in his never-ceasing work of reaching Muslims with the gospel.

We call upon the church to take the study of Islam seriously. This should seek to explain the true nature of Islamic thought and history in all its diversity. It will inform Christians about Islam and the diversity of Muslims, as well as the challenges of political and fundamentalist Islam.

The Christian gospel is about relationships: mending, developing and enhancing relationships between people and God, and with others.

Without creating fear or hostility, the engagement with Islam must go beyond the academic to include ministry to Muslims. Preparation for such ministry should be integrated into all levels of theological formation.

4. FIVE AREAS OF ACTION

Key recommendations for reaching Muslims with the gospel relate to five areas:

- Training (including theological education)
- Mobilizing Christians, local churches and agencies for reaching Muslims
- Contextualizing the gospel in Muslim cultures
- Overcoming barriers and threats to mission
- Caring for Muslim Background Believers.

4.1 Training (including theological education)

We urge that all Christians in every local church and every training institution be motivated and equipped to understand Muslims and to minister among them.

Training at the *local church* level should address the needs of both pastors and congregation members. There should be a focus on:

- overcome fear and prejudice towards Muslims,
- motivating people to build positive relationships with Muslims, including information on how to live as neighbours with Muslims,
- providing accurate information on Islam and the diversity of Muslims, and
- how to welcome and care for Muslim background believers.

Christian training institutions need to mainstream teaching about Islam and Muslims across all levels of learning. Every seminary should offer some level of training on Islam.

Practitioners, who devote themselves to witness among Muslims need specific, intentional training and on-going equipping throughout their ministry. We call upon denominations, mission agencies, theological institutions and local churches everywhere to provide for the training of people who specialize in outreach to Muslims.

We also call upon the church to *invest research and development efforts* in ways which support the whole church's mission to Muslims.

There is an urgent need in training and research to focus on the needs of *Muslim background believers* and how best to care for them.

4.2 Mobilizing Christians, congregations and agencies for reaching Muslims

We call upon the world-wide church to mobilize people and resources in support of missions to Muslims. This includes development and strengthening of networks, and raising up workers. The foundation of this mobilization should be a *call to prayer*, leading to spiritual revival.

Training (see above) is a vital component in mobilizing the church. We call upon individuals and organizations with expertise to devote themselves to the task of motivating ordinary Christians in local congregations everywhere to engage in evangelism to Muslims, starting in their own community. Muslim back-ground believers should lay a vital role in this.

It is vitally important that Christians *maintain a presence* as authentic Christ-like lives alongside Muslim neighbours, friends, colleagues and contacts. Such a presence can assist to break down barriers and demonstrate the love of God for Muslims. Therefore we encourage

Christians everywhere, wherever possible to intentionally live out their faith alongside Muslims in neighbourhoods and workplaces, and not to retreat from contact with Muslims.

We believe that the Holy Spirit will continue to *call people to go and minister among Muslims* on a long-term basis. Historically the church has overlooked or even ignored the challenge of taking the gospel to Muslims. Even today only a small proportion of those involved in cross-cultural ministry are working with Muslims. There is a great need for workers from all countries to be recruited and released by local churches everywhere for work amongst Muslims.

Mobilization requires the whole church to be attuned to possibilities for *partnerships between agencies*, and for *creativity in cross-cultural outreach*.

We urge the church to seek out, be aware of, and focus mission efforts upon *neglected Muslim people groups* (for example the Muslims of India).

We urge local pastors everywhere to use every opportunity to *share testimonies* of what God is doing to bring Muslims to faith in Christ.

4.3 Overcoming Barriers and Threats to Mission

Christ's calling for his church to reach Muslims with the gospel meets many difficulties and obstacles. The Islamic apostasy law remains a restriction upon the religious freedom of Muslims (this is discussed in the Issue Group report on the Persecuted Church LOP 32). Today Muslims can proselytize freely among Christian populations, usually without fear of persecution, but Christians face many obstacles and even threats in taking the gospel to Muslims. Many of those who work among Muslims are understandably cautious about publicizing their activities, given the risk of personal danger, or of their work being disrupted.

Another challenge to Christian outreach to Muslims is the international atmosphere of tension and conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is important that Christian witness include work which promotes peace and reconciliation at every level, as well as advocacy for those whose rights are threatened.

Missions work among Muslims should *discern the body of Christ* and wherever possible work through or alongside local national churches.

We recommend that

- (a) Christians *co-operate wherever possible with Muslims* in areas of community development, humanitarian issues and other areas of mutual concern.
- (b) Christians *avoid the use of the language of control and aggression* in dealing with Muslims, including such terms as 'crusade'.
- (c) Christians everywhere *advocate for and promote human rights* of all oppressed peoples, including both Christians and Muslims.
- (d) The church *inform itself concerning the geo-political issues* which impact upon missions to Muslims and engage in the task of understanding the geo-political world view of Muslim communities. The church must also *keep itself informed of the political situation* in nations where Muslims are found, and take steps to understand the way that this impacts on

existing Christian populations as well as on the practice of Christian mission to Muslims.

Christians *should not abandon the public square* when Muslims seek to occupy it. We recommend that Christians *pray for justice and peace*, and *take action with wisdom and courage* in responding to persecution of the church which is created through the imposition of Shariah and the resulting status of dhimmitude (the repressed condition of non-Muslims who live under Shariah conditions.)

4.4 Caring for Muslim Background Believers

Effective care for believers in Christ who come from Muslim backgrounds is one of the greatest challenges in taking the gospel to Muslims. It is a challenge for the whole church. All new believers can face difficulties, but for those from Muslim backgrounds these can be especially critical. Issues include the need to be welcomed into a Christian community, to grow in character and faith, and to deal with rejection from one's former Muslim community.

Often local *churches can be unaware* of the intensity of the issues facing new believers from Muslim backgrounds and they may themselves reject new believers out of their lack of understanding, adding to the sense of isolation which they may already feel.

It is *a specific calling to care for new believers* from a Muslim background. This is a calling which congregations and agencies should invite people into and support them in pursuing. Whole congregations also need to embrace this calling whenever Muslims respond to the gospel and come to among them seeking a spiritual family to belong to. The risk that local churches are not places of safety, love and nurture for new believers is all too real. The local congregation should plan for and cherish contexts in which the Muslim background believer can grow.

The *model of the family* speaks powerfully into the Muslim context. The church must be committed to long-term, painstaking and person-centred approach to caring for Muslim Background Believers. The new believer in Christ needs family loved showered upon them. When they come to Christ, they need to come home.

4.5 Contextualization

We affirm the mandate to share in love the Good News with all people near and far, including Muslims, with a view to seeing culturally relevant expressions of the Body of Christ among all peoples. Approaches to bringing the gospel to Muslims can take a wide variety of forms, ranging from a presentation in terms of an alien Christian culture, through to 'insider movements', where people commit to following Christ while still considering themselves to be culturally Muslims, and inside the community of Islam. This diversity in degrees of contextualization of the gospel is an area of on-going discussion, debate and theological reflection.

The appropriateness of these diverse approaches must be considered in the light of the context in which they are pursued. For example, evangelizing Muslims from an exclusively Islamic community is quite different from sharing the gospel within a tribal group which includes significant numbers of animists, Christians and Muslims in among its members. In the first case to leave Islam may be tantamount to rejecting one's whole culture and nationality. In the second case, the change of

religion may bring with it minimal cultural change and minimal loss of extended family connections.

There is *a great diversity of approaches* to reaching Muslims with the gospel around the world today. The theological and missiological evaluation of this diversity of approaches is still in its early stages.

We do *invite the church to learn about, investigate, understand and respond* to these different approaches, and their successes and failures with wisdom, sensitivity and an openness to the word of God and the stirring of the Holy Spirit.

Certain key principles can guide the church's efforts in contextualizing the unchanging gospel of Jesus Christ:

- *Muslims are our neighbours*, to be loved and honoured as such.
- There is *grace and freedom in Christ*: cultural legalism has no place in developing authentic expressions of life in Christ among believers from a Muslim background.
- We should *avoid putting cultural obstacles* in the way of people who are coming to Christ.
- We encourage *gracious dialogue* and interaction, study and prayer among those who are exploring new models of ministry.
- We encourage *ongoing research*, Biblical reflection and study of emerging new movements which are presenting a contextualized gospel to Muslims.
- There is *a diversity of Muslim cultural contexts*, and there is a variety of ways God is working among and through them.
- We encourage *further research on Muslim peoples worldwide* so as to increase our understanding, and to facilitate more effective and sensitive communication among them.
- We encourage the *development of training programs* to help Christians to understand their Muslim neighbours better, and to minister among them with sensitivity.
- It is essential to *discern and affirm the Body of Christ* and its unity across many and diverse expressions.

5. REGIONAL CONCERNS

Muslims are found in all parts of the world, and the needs and concerns relating to evangelizing them varies from place to place and from region to region. The Issue Group considered specific needs of the following regional groupings:

- South East Asia
- South Asia
- Sub-Sahara Africa
- Western Nations (the lands of immigration)
- The Middle East and North Africa
- A sixth group — Central Asia — was envisaged, but there were not sufficient representatives from this region to constitute a group.

Many concerns of regions reflected themes which have been outlined already. Here is given only a brief summary of distinctives which emerged for each region. Where the regional concerns closely matched the issues dealt with above they are given in less detail.

The call to prayer was a repeated theme in every part of the world, especially to raise up people for gospel ministry among Muslims.

5.1 South East Asia

The two key issues of concern which emerged for South East Asia were mobilizing the church, with an emphasis on raising up workers and the nurture of believers from Muslim backgrounds.

5.2 South Asia

Priorities for South Asia centred in encouraging contextualized approaches to gospel ministry among Muslims, mobilizing workers for this task and facilitating the support of existing Christian churches. Despite the vast amount of Christian work going on in India, only a few hundred workers are focusing on the two hundred million Muslims of that nation.

5.3 The Middle East and North Africa

For Christians in the Middle East and North Africa, persecution is a major issue. This is, for example, one of the factors which can inhibit the church from welcoming believers who have left Islam. The whole church is called upon to advocate for their brothers and sisters in Christ who live in the Middle East and North Africa.

Associated problems are a sense of isolation from the world-wide church, disunity between denominations and the migration of believers out of the region. Here, as in Sub-Sahara Africa, the economic problems faced by Muslim background believers are of concern. Another issue is the impact of the Israel-Palestine conflict on interfaith relations.

5.4 Sub-Sahara Africa

In Sub-Saharan Africa, conflict along Christian-Muslim lines looms as an issue in several nations (e.g. Congo, Nigeria, and Kenya). The rise of Islamism (Islamic Fundamentalism) is keenly felt in its impact on the political domain, with rising pressures for Sharia implementation. Positive interfaith relations and actions to promote constructive socio-political action are called for.

There is an urgent need for training and mobilization, but a lack of available resources to do it with. Africans are also calling for deeper

theological reflection on the relationship between Christianity and Islam, and on best practice in missions.

Finally, poverty is a factor in the conversion of some to Islam and believers from a Muslim background often suffer financial difficulties.

5.5 The West / North (the lands of immigration)

This grouping includes a wide variety of nations: Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand. The nations of South America face similar issues. What all these regions have in common is that they have significant Muslim minorities due to recent immigration.

In the West there is a need to overcome confusion, ignorance and fear about Muslims and Islam. We call upon local churches to mobilize to reach out to their Muslim neighbours with the message of the gospel.

There is a need in the West for theological reflection on the role of public governance and policy and the impact this is having on evangelism, whilst secular Western societies, formerly predominately Christian, are being transformed into multi-cultural, multi-faith communities.

6. A RENEWED CALL

Never before in the history of Islam have so many Muslims in so many different contexts been so open to responding to the gospel. Never before has there been a world-wide movement focusing on reaching Muslims for the gospel. Just a few decades ago what is happening now would have seemed impossible. These are harvest times. This emerging harvest is no ordinary one: it takes skill, commitment and sustained care to bring it into God's storehouses.

We call upon congregations, church leaders and individual Christians everywhere to reject indifference to God's heart for Muslims. We call upon the church to combat and overcome all forms of indifference, fear, or spiritual intimidation which inhibits mission to Muslims. Be bold and sacrificial in setting people aside for ministry to Muslims, in training them, and in releasing and supporting them into the harvest.

Christians need training to develop Christ-like attitudes towards Muslims, dealing with and overcoming prejudices, anger, bitterness, hatred and fear. The church in majority Muslim situations, suffering discrimination and persecution, should be encouraged to include and emphasize the theology of the cross in spiritual formation and take heart in pursuing its mission. This effort needs and deserves the solid support of the rest of the world-wide church, using every means available to it.

We must also make conscious efforts to equip the church to help Muslim neighbours who want to follow Jesus, to integrate and be comfortable in the body of Christ.

In the current climate of uncertainty, tension and fear, we are resolved to send a message of hope and encouragement to the Church. There are new opportunities of openness to the gospel across the Muslim world.

Many emerging leaders in mission to Muslims were once followers of Islam, but are now passionate followers of Jesus. In country after country, Muslims who have come to Christ are forming vital and growing faith communities. These communities are living witnesses to the transforming power of the gospel. This is already a season of harvest, but the great work lies before us.