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Eid al-Adha: Seeking Closeness to Allah

by Steve Krstulovich



**Muslim pilgrims gather around the Kaaba.*

From June 16-18, millions of Muslims from around the world will arrive in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for Islamic pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Adult Muslims must perform the *Hajj* at least once in their lifetime, if possible, to earn spiritual merit, wipe away past sins, and start afresh. Many Muslims voluntarily perform additional pilgrimages to Mecca at other times, known as *Umrah*. The *Hajj* is Saudi Arabia's greatest source of revenue—after the sale of oil and gas!

During the *Hajj*, Muslims will rehearse for the Day of Judgment and perform the Islamic Festival of Sacrifice, known as *Eid al-Adha*, seeking closeness to Allah. Even

Muslims not attending the *Hajj* must observe *Eid al-Adha* every year, wherever they live.

Abraham's Willingness to Sacrifice His Son (the *Akedah*)

A major focus during the *Hajj* is the account of Allah asking Abraham to prove his faith and obedience by sacrificing his son. Genesis 22:1-18 describes this event, known in Judaism as the *Akedah* (binding), and *surah* 37:99-113 reflects it in the Quran. The *Akedah* lies at the heart of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and is essential to the understanding of all three faiths. Judaism, the oldest of these

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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Mark Brink

International Director
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Reaching Muslim Peoples



On my recent travels to and from a training course on ministry to Muslims, I stopped off in the island of Reunion. I picked up a pamphlet in the airport that told of the natural attractions of the island. The nation of Reunion was formed by volcanoes, with one remaining active. The island is a rich natural wonderland and attracts many adventurers who love nature and trekking its mountains. It is a tropical place with an average rainfall of around 200 inches a year. The tourist pamphlet stated: “The explosive power of a volcano produced this elliptical shaped island of immense beauty whose main export is the sweetness of sugar cane.” This tropical island brought to my mind the typology of the explosive power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the indwelling third person of the Godhead in the believer. He is the omnipotent power at work in the world to draw sinners to Christ. He empowers the life of the believer for his God-given work. The Holy Spirit teaches (John 14:26), guides (Rom. 8:14), comforts (John 14:18), intercedes (Rom. 8:26), directs (Acts 8:29), creates

(Gen. 1:2), regenerates (John 3:6), sanctifies (2 Thess. 2:13), endues with power (Acts 1:8), and gives spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 14).

These are some of the all-encompassing works of the Spirit today in our world and in the life of the believer. Without the Holy Spirit, we can be nothing, become nothing, and do nothing. In our ministry at Global Initiative, we daily spend time in corporate prayer seeking the explosive power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and ministry. Just as the unseen, explosive power of volcanoes created the island nation of Reunion, we need the explosive Spirit to produce in and through us the sweetness and energizing power we need for ministry and life.

As you read this edition about the Islamic celebration of the sacrifice, may you be burden for 2 billion people who have never known Jesus Christ as the lamb that was slain for them from the foundations of the world. May the Spirit use us to reach them!

Muslim World News

Saudi Opens First Alcohol Store in over 70 Years

RIYADH – For the first time in over 70 years, a shop selling alcohol has opened in Saudi Arabia, a diplomat has revealed. The move marks another step towards social liberalization in the kingdom.

While exclusively catering to non-Muslim diplomats, the store, situated in Riyadh’s Diplomatic Quarter, aligns with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman’s ambitious plans to transform Saudi Arabia into a thriving tourism and business hub.

The store currently offers liquor, wine, and only two types of beer. Customers are required to show their diplomatic identifications, and mobile phones must be placed inside pouches while inside. A mobile phone app allows purchases on an allotment system, the diplomat said.

Diplomats have traditionally imported alcoholic drinks through specialized services for consumption on diplomatic premises. Those without access have resorted to purchasing from illegal sources or brewing their own, though the risks include severe penalties such as long jail sentences, hefty fines, public floggings and deportation, according to the U.S. State Department. – *Euronews with AP*

Indian State’s Polygamy Ban Divides Muslim Women

NEW DELHI – Shayara Bano heaved a sigh of relief at the enactment of a law banning polygamy in her small Indian state.

“I can now say that my battle against age-old Islamic rules on marriage and divorce has been won,” said Bano, a Muslim woman whose husband chose to have two wives and divorced her by uttering “*talaq*” three times. But some, like Sadaf Jafar, did not cheer the new law.

“Polygamy is permissible in Islam under strict rules and regulations but it is misused, said Jafar, who is seeking alimony to support their two children. The adoption of the Uniform Civil Code in the state of Uttarakhand has opened a chasm between women in India’s largest religious minority.

Some, like activist Bano, 49, celebrate the new provisions as the overdue assertion of secular law over parallel *sharia* rulings on marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and succession. For others like Jafar, Muslim politicians, and Islamic scholars, it is an unwelcome stunt.

India is home to the third-largest Muslim population in the world. – *REUTERS*

Prayer Profile – Muslim Unreached People Group

***Afar of Ethiopia – Population: 2,155,000 – 99% Muslim – 0.90% Christian**

The Afar claim to be descendants of Ham (Noah’s son). They are a proud people, emphasizing a man’s strength and bravery. The Afar consist of two subgroups: the Asaemara (“red ones”), who are the more prestigious and powerful nobles living primarily in the area of Assayita; and the Adaemara (“white ones”), who are the commoners living in the desert areas.

Most of the Afar are nomads who herd sheep, goats, cattle, and camels. A man’s wealth is measured by the size of his herds. While most Afar are herdsmen - many work in the Danakil Depression prying loose slabs of solid salt during the dry season, supplying ready-to-use salt in the form of crude blocks.

Early in their history, the Afar were heavily influenced by the Islamic religion; and today, Islam is still held in great esteem. The people do not eat pork and rarely drink alcohol. Those who can afford to do so, make a pilgrimage to Mecca. In addition, many pre-Islamic beliefs and customs are also prevalent among the Afar. They believe that certain trees and groves have sacred powers. Spirits of the dead are believed to be very powerful, and a “feast of the dead,” called Rabe-na, is celebrated each year. Many people wear protective leather amulets that contain herbs and verses from the Quran.

Prayer Points

1. Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth more long-term Christian laborers to assist in reaching the Afar.
2. Ask God to anoint the gospel as it goes forth via radio to the Afar.
3. Ask the Lord to raise up prayer teams who will begin breaking up the soil through intercession.
4. Ask the Lord to bring forth a strong Afar church for the glory of His name.

**For further information on the Afar people, see www.joshuaproject.net*



**Pilgrims return from the Mountain of Mercy.*

Eid al-Adha: Seeking

faiths, celebrates the *Akedah* during the annual observance of the seven biblical festivals commanded through Moses in Leviticus 23. However, as Colossians 2:16-17 indicates, Jesus fulfills that which was foreshadowed in the festivals of the Old Testament: “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.”

The Prophetic Significance of the Seven Biblical Festivals

The first three of these seven festivals come in quick succession in the springtime and are known as Passover, the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and the Festival of First Fruits. It was during these Spring Festivals that the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus occurred (1 Corinthians 5:7-8; 11:23-26; 15:20-23). The fourth festival comes 50 days later and is known as the Festival of Weeks or Pentecost. During this festival, the baptism of the Holy Spirit empowered the Early Church, enabling Christians to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:4-11; 2:1-4). Moses commanded these prophetic festivals 1,500 years before Jesus fulfilled them!

The three remaining festivals, which occur in the fall, are also prophetic in nature but point to major events related to Christ that are still in the future. They come in quick succession and are known as the Festival of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), and the Festival of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*). They are commonly held to prefigure Christ’s return, His removal of the wicked to bring creation close to God again (at-one-ment), and the clothing of all who believe in Him with immortal heavenly bodies (Matthew 13:38-43; 1 Corinthians 15:50-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).¹

The Jewish Observance of the *Akedah*

For Jews, the Fall Festivals are three of their most important religious days. The first of the three Fall Festivals, the Festival of Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*), focuses on repentance and prayer. During this time, the Jews read Genesis 22 to contemplate the *Akedah*.

The second Fall Festival, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), is one of the holiest days in Judaism. In it, Jews seek closeness (at-one-ment) with God. The third and final Fall Festival, the Festival of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), is the most joyous celebration and commemorates the time when God’s Kingdom will reign over the earth. The Bible provides the following description of this glorious event:

A day of the LORD is coming, Jerusalem, when your possessions will be plundered and divided up within your very walls. I will gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it... Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle... *The LORD will be king over the whole earth.* On that day there will be one LORD, and his name the only name... Then the sur-



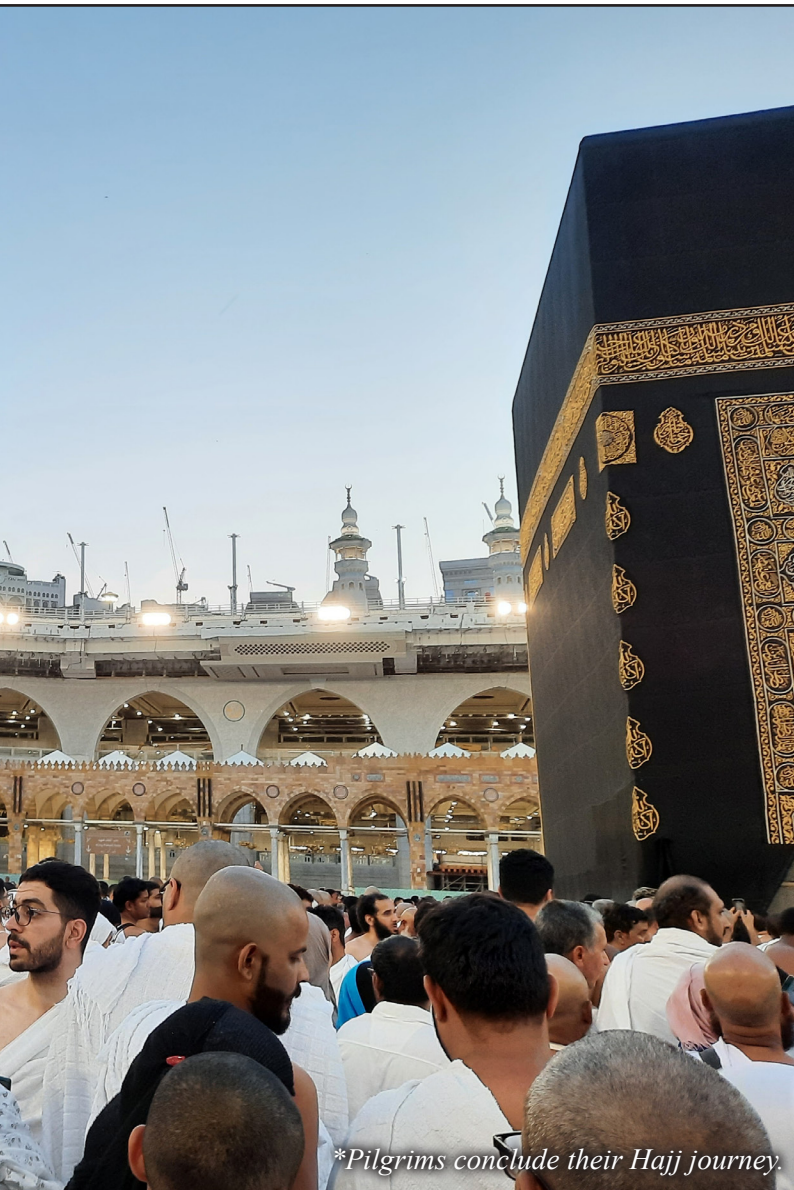
vivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:1-16, emphasis added)

Muslims have launched massive attacks against the nation of Israel during the Jewish Fall Festivals. For instance, the 1973 *Yom Kippur* war, during which the Jews gained control of Jerusalem, and the recent October 7th war with Gaza, were both initiated during significant Jewish festivals.

g Closeness to Allah

The Islamic Observance of the *Akedah*

During the first of the five days of the *Hajj*, male pilgrims don special white clothing and enter a state of ritual purity. They run seven times between two large stones called Mount Marwa and Mount Safa and then circumambulate the *Kaaba*² seven times, before traveling to the tent city of Mina five miles away, where they spend the day and offer prayers.



**Pilgrims conclude their Hajj journey.*

The second day of pilgrimage is known as the “Day of *Hajj*.” The pilgrims now travel to Arafat (the Mountain of Mercy) twelve miles east of Mecca. There, from noon through sunset, they stand to listen to sermons, repent, atone for past sins, and ask Allah for mercy. It is a rehearsal for the Day of Judgment, and the *Hajj* is invalid without this. They then travel by night to the valley of Muzdalifah (closeness), between Arafat and Mina, to pray, sleep on the open ground, and gather pebbles to stone the Devil.

During the final three days of the *Hajj*, pilgrims cast stones at pillars representing the devil. The *Eid al-Adha* celebration begins that day at sunset and commemorates the divine provision of a ram in place of Abraham’s son in the *Akedah*. To earn closeness to Allah, pilgrims can buy vouchers to have an abattoir slaughter an animal on their behalf in Mecca. Muslims worldwide are also required to offer an animal for sacrifice on that day. After slaughtering the ram, male pilgrims shave their heads, circumambulate the *Kaaba* seven more times in Mecca, and return to Mina to spend the night.

The *Eid al-Adha* ends on the fourth day of the *Hajj* with pilgrims once again throwing stones at each of the three pillars. They will repeat this on the fifth day of *Hajj* before leaving Mina to return to Mecca. If pilgrims do not leave Mina before sunset, they must stone each of the three pillars again the next day before returning to Mecca. After completing the *Hajj*, non-local pilgrims will once again circumambulate the *Kaaba* seven times before leaving Mecca.

The Christian Observance of the *Akedah*

In Genesis 22:8, Abraham told his son Isaac that God would provide a lamb for the *Akedah* sacrifice. Instead, the angel of the LORD (Jesus, the preincarnate Word of God), provided a ram caught by its horns in a thicket to take Isaac’s place. This prefigured the crown of thorns that Christ would wear on His own head at the crucifixion. The Bible tells us that John the baptizer pointed to Jesus and said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29)! Jesus himself explained that “just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness [on a pole in Numbers 21:9], so the Son of Man [Jesus] must be lifted up [on the cross] that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him” (John 3:14-15).

Jesus declared: “The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father” (John 10:17-19). God loves us deeply, and He is near to each of us when we call out to Him. He has provided His own Son as the perfect sinless sacrifice required by the holiness of God.

Christians see the greater fulfillment of the *Akedah* in the sacrament of Communion, where the bread, signifying the body of Christ, is called the *Adha* (sacrifice) by Arab Christians. The Quran itself does not refer to the sacrifice in *surah* 37:99-113 by that term,³ even though Muslims refer

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to their Festival of Sacrifice as the *Eid al-Adha*! It is sin that separates us from closeness to God, not fate, as Muslims believe: “Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:23-28).

Muslim Objections to the Christian View of the *Akedah*

Most Muslims deny that Jesus died on the cross despite overwhelming historical testimony by many ancient non-Christian writers that He did! What does this Muslim claim say about God in that He let people believe this for 600 years before the time of Muhammad? The real question is not IF Jesus was crucified, but WHY Jesus was crucified.

Muslims today also claim that the Jews are wrong about which son of Abraham was commanded to be sacrificed and insist that it was Ishmael. However, the Quran does not actually name which of Abraham’s sons was to be sacrificed, while the Bible tells us five times in Genesis 22 that it was Isaac.⁴ Even the famous Muslim scholar Al-Tabari admitted that “the earliest sages of our Prophet’s nation disagree about which of Abraham’s two sons it was that he was commanded to sacrifice. Some say it was Isaac, while others say it was Ishmael.”

A Christian Reply

The Quran says that when Abraham attempted to offer his son, Allah stopped him and said, “‘Thou hast already fulfilled the vision!’—thus indeed do We reward those who do right. For this was obviously a trial—**And we ransomed him with a momentous sacrifice**” (Quran 37:105-107). But why did Abraham’s son need to be ransomed by a “momentous sacrifice” if the vision was obviously a test, and Abraham and his son did well and passed?

In the biblical account of the *Akedah*, written 2,000 years earlier, God told Abraham to take his son and “go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you” (Genesis 22:2). When God provided the ram in place of Isaac, “Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide (*Jehovah-jireh*), And throughout the centuries to this very day, it is said, ‘On the mountain of

the LORD it will be provided’” (Genesis 22:13-14).

Why did Moses, who wrote the *Akedah* account in Genesis more than four centuries after the time of Abraham, say that people continue to say that “on the mountain of the LORD it will be provided?” Many scholars agree that the place of Jesus’ crucifixion and the ancient site of Mount Moriah are the same area. God told Abraham that “through your offspring **all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me**” (Genesis 22:18).

The book of Hebrews explains the “**momentous sacrifice**” by which “all the nations on earth will be blessed.”

Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with human hands that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. . . . But he has appeared once for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. (Hebrews 9:24-26)

Conclusion

Muslims often admit that despite the elaborate ritual of the *Hajj* to wipe away past sins and start afresh, they continue to sin. When do you think your sins will be paid off? Will your sin debt be paid on Judgment Day?

To gain true and lasting closeness to God, one must come through Jesus: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Though we cannot pay off our own sin debt, God himself has lovingly made the way for us through the sacrificial death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This year, during the *Hajj* and *Eid al-Adha*, pray for Muslims to have a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, **the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world**, who alone can give them the closeness to their Creator for which they long.

¹ The reason why the observance of events related to these festivals occur at different times in each faith is because Christians use a solar calendar to keep in phase with the seasons of the year, while Jews use a corrected lunar calendar tracking the phases of the moon, which occasionally adds an extra month that jumps back and forth in phase with the seasons, and Islam uses an uncorrected lunar calendar where dates cycle through all of the seasons by occurring about 11 days earlier each year.

² The *Kaaba* (cube) is a small stone building regarded as Islam’s holiest shrine. It sits in the center of its most important mosque, which is in Mecca, and is the direction to which Muslims pray five times a day.

³ To describe the sacrifice, Islam uses the Arabic word *Qurban*, which comes from the root word meaning closeness.

⁴ In Islamic tradition, 38 of Muhammad’s companions name the boy Isaac while only 28 name him Ishmael, 3 *hadith* name him Isaac while none name him Ishmael, and 131 opinions attributed to Muhammad’s companions name the boy Isaac while 133 name him Ishmael; Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 170-178.



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Friday, May 3, 2024. Please pray for

...a sovereign intervention of God to bring hope, restoration, and lasting peace to the people of Gaza and Israel.

...protection for new believers in Mauritania. A video of a baptismal service went viral, leading to a call for Christians to be killed. Authorities have calmed the situation, but tensions remain high.

...Almighty God to protect, deliver, and restore Nigerian Christians from the onslaught of Muslim terrorists; may His presence encourage and sustain them.

Friday, May 10, 2024. Please pray for

...the Holy Spirit to succor the war-weary Christians of Syria. There are an estimated 603,000 Christian believers in the country of 23 million; 90% of whom are Muslims.

...discipling efforts with new converts from Islam in Turkiye. Workers report “a hunger for spiritual truth among Turkish youth.” Of Turkiye’s population of 86 million, 96% are Muslim.

...the release of a 74-year old Christian man named Apollinaris in Indonesia. Accused of blasphemy for criticizing the prophet Muhammad, he has been imprisoned for 3 years.

Friday, May 17, 2024. Please pray for

...protection for Christian workers in Mindanao, Philippines. At a worship service in Marawi City, Islamic terrorists detonated a bomb, killing 11 people and wounding 50.

...the release of local government permits needed to add a second floor to the Pakistan Rescue Project Center in a major city of Pakistan. Muslim and Christian children are being rescued from the “brick kilns” and given hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

...church planting teams in two Muslim-majority areas of Indonesia. Team leaders say, “The gates of hell will not prevail.” Of Indonesia’s population of 277 million, 83% are Muslim.

Friday, May 24, 2024. Please pray for

...the ministry of Ali, the son of a mullah in Iran. After his recent conversion, Ali has become an itinerant evangelist, “fleeing” from one city to the next in order to tell his conversion story.

...success for Ahwad, a former Muslim Hamas fighter. In a dream, Jesus said to him, “I am here to rescue you. Come after me.” Ahwad declares, “My ‘fight’ now is to lead Muslims to Christ.”

...an underground church network in Muslim-majority countries of the Middle East. A leader says, “We cannot appear on TV and tell about this, but believe me, Muslims are receiving Jesus.”

Friday, May 31, 2024. Please pray for

...the ministry of Nihad in North Africa. He says, “I was born into a fanatic Muslim family. My goal was to win the world for Islam. I went to a house church to make trouble; but it was there that I heard a life-changing message about Jesus. Today, I am part of a Bible distribution team.”

...a powerful anointing to rest on a local church in a 95% Muslim-majority city of Bangladesh. The pastor reports, “350 Muslims have converted to Christ. In 2024, we expect many more.”

...wisdom for Miriam, who holds secret meetings for Muslim women in her home in Tehran. She says, “Recently the Lord has delivered three demon-possessed Muslim women.”



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Friday, June 7, 2024. Please pray for

...converts from Islam, who long to have “church fellowship” with their families, but due to hostile Islamic environments - cannot. Attempting to do so could invite disownment or death.

...encouragement for a group of 15 converts from Islam who had to travel to a nearby Middle Eastern country in order for their baptism to be confidential and safe.

...the release of ““Dr. Y,” who converted from Islam in 2023. He remains in prison in a North African Muslim-majority country. He was jailed and tortured for apostasy and illegal evangelism.

Friday, June 14, 2024. Please pray for

...Muslims throughout the world who will celebrate Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice) from June 16 through June 20. For Muslims, this occasion commemorates the belief that Abraham was willing to sacrifice his son (Ishmael is implied), but Allah stopped him by providing a ram.

...fresh anointing on 60 “Home Fellowships” scattered throughout Muslim-majority countries in Central Asia. These “fellowships” are dedicated to reaching Muslim neighbors.

...Majda from Afghanistan, who says: “Three years ago, my family converted from Islam. For some time afterwards, we had no Bible. Yesterday our house church pastor brought us our own Bible!”

Friday, June 21, 2024. Please pray for

...the prayer ministry of Muslim converts. The leader says, “They know how to pray. You may expect answers, as you will have 1,200 enthusiastic ex-Muslim converts interceding for you.”

...success for a social media ministry to Muslims in the Arabic-speaking world. Their 2024 goal is: “To reach 1 million Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

...Christians in Kazakhstan. Hostility to Christians is rising, as Muslims increasingly link nationalism to Islamic identity. Of Kazakhstan’s population of 19 million, 52% are Muslim.

Friday, June 28, 2024. Please pray for

...protection for Zhumashbek, a convert from Islam in Kyrgyzstan. He says, “Men from my village threatened to throw me in the river if I did not stop talking about Jesus. But so far, I am still going.” Of Kyrgyzstan’s population of 7 million, 94% are Muslim.

...courage for Libyan converts from Islam. Most born-again believers in Libya have come from other countries for work opportunities. Of Libya’s population of 7 million, 97% are Muslim.

...the approximately one million people in Christian-majority Mozambique who have been forced to flee attacks by Islamists in the north. Jihad onslaughts have taken the lives of 1,800 Christians since 2017.

**All personal names used herein are pseudonyms.*

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