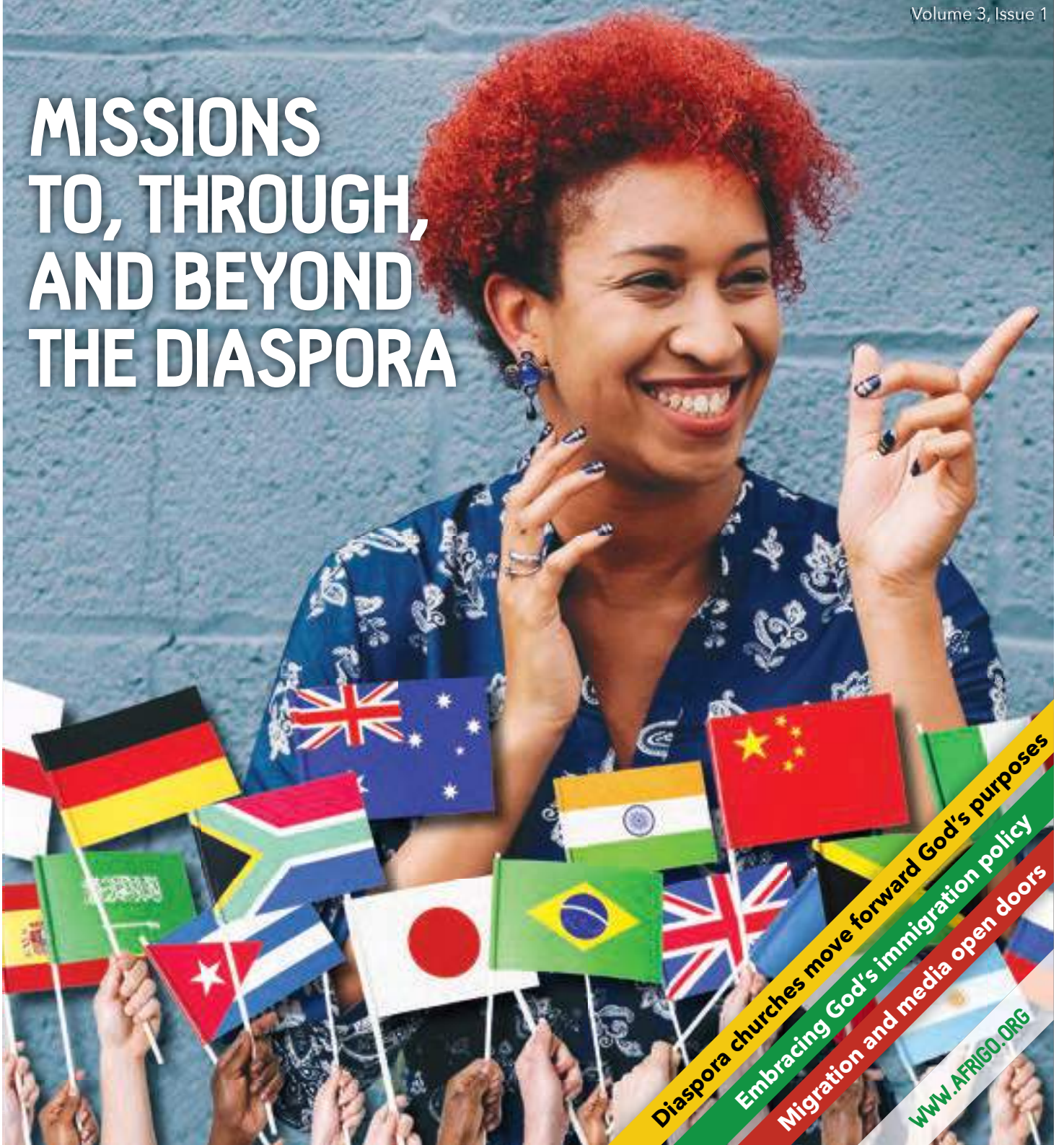


# AFRIGO

Encouraging the Church in world mission

Volume 3, Issue 1

**MISSIONS  
TO, THROUGH,  
AND BEYOND  
THE DIASPORA**



**Diaspora churches move forward God's purposes**  
**Embracing God's immigration policy**  
**Migration and media open doors**  
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**AFRIGO** is a publication aimed at raising awareness, mobilising, training and inspiring churches and individuals in Africa towards global mission.

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# SHARING

## THE GOSPEL WITH SCATTERED PEOPLES

A kind of earthquake is going on all over the world. Nations are experiencing cataclysms that are making people move “from everywhere to everywhere”. This dispersion of people is bringing unreached people groups within the neighbourhood of the Church. Consequently, the missions landscape is changing, and missiologists have come up with a new buzzword: diaspora ministry.

Migration is the movement of people from their place of origin into other places. Biblically, it is part of God’s plan to enable the Church to accomplish the Great Commission. As migrations occur globally, mission to the unreached is being impacted. Today unreached tribes from the ends of the earth are accessible within the orbits of the Church.

The presence of migrants everywhere we look makes diaspora ministry a reality for Christians. We have the opportunity to deliver the gospel of the kingdom to unreached peoples in the neighbourhood in cross-cultural, cross-religious ministries ... without necessarily crossing borders into other countries.

So what will our response be? Regardless of how they ended up there, the reality is that on our doorstep are standing the least, the last and the lost. The Church needs to seize this opportunity and reach out to the world that has come to us!

**The presence of migrants everywhere we look makes diaspora ministry a reality for Christians.**

In this issue of AfriGO we consider diaspora ministry and how to go about it. We take a look at diaspora work in southern Nigeria, the UK and the USA. Practitioners share their experience, their challenges and their joys.

Several of them have offered “best practice” guidelines for diaspora ministry. These include 1) Pray: Ask God daily to lead you to immigrants with whom He

wants you to connect; 2) Develop a heart of compassion for the diaspora: See the diaspora as Jesus saw people – lost sheep without a shepherd; 3) Get into their world: Jesus left heaven and came to dwell in the slums with us. Begin a steady entrance into the world of the diaspora. Learn to say *hello* in the languages of the people you meet. Learn from them instead being eager to teach them; 4) Invite them to your home: This step must come after many other interactions with the immigrant in neutral places; 5) Let them know in a natural way that you are a follower of Jesus: Aspire to have a passion and love for Christ that is contagious. The news of his saving grace is the greatest and most precious message anyone can ever hear, and we should not be ashamed to talk about this truth.

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*John Idoko is the Coordinator of CAPRO Diaspora Ministries and a diaspora field leader in southern Nigeria. Previously he led a multi-national company in church planting in an Arab community for more than 15 years. He is married to Dr. Ope, a kingdom worker too, and they have three teenage children.*

# MISSION... RIGHT WHERE I STAND

## ENGAGING THE DIASPORA PEOPLES WORLDWIDE

**T**he activity of Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad has displaced millions. Many have fled to southern Nigeria, making it possible for the Church to reach out to them with the gospel. In response, CAPRO, a missions agency which began in Nigeria, set up a diaspora field. Teams are involved in church planting among these scattered northern ethnic groups, which are divided into two broad categories: Muslims and non-Muslims.

Our experience has revealed some essential aspects of diaspora ministry, as we have planted churches among northern migrants who have relocated to southern Nigeria. We've put these principles to work as we engage diasporic ethnic groups within the Christian environment of the Church in Nigeria. However, the principles have global applications for ministry among any diaspora people.

### Ministry to the diaspora

This means direct effort by Christians to relate with, love and reach out to Muslim migrants in their communities. These migrants come into the neighbourhood from diverse backgrounds, states, regions, countries, and continents. They come as students, refugees, tourists, professionals, or labourers, driven by a desire to expand Islam to all the parts of the world through *hijra*. For example, North and West African Muslim migrants have settled in Europe; Middle Eastern migrants have fled to North America; and Muslim migrants from northern Nigeria, Niger and Chad have ended up in southern Nigeria.

As we encounter these Muslim migrants in the community and marketplace, let us fully engage them in prayers, friendship and evangelism, thereby fulfilling the Great Commission – even without crossing borders into other countries.

### Ministry through the diaspora

Missionaries and lay Christians also have the opportunity to focus on nominal

Christian migrants to bring them to Christ, disciple them, and envision them to reach out to Muslims and others within their diaspora communities. A missionary in France, for example, may engage and disciple African Christian migrants, empowering them to reach African Muslim migrants. This is doing missions through the diaspora.

Another example of ministry through the diaspora is a missionary in United Arab Emirates who disciples Asians who work in malls and in the homes of Arabs. His task is to envision and empower these people to strategically share the gospel with Emiratis.

A believer in southern Nigeria who disciples Christian migrants from the North, helping them to bring their kith and kin to Christ, is also doing ministry *through* the diaspora.

### Ministry beyond the diaspora

This aspect of the practice of diaspora ministry has three main emphases:

1) *Equipping the Church for ministry to Muslim migrants.* Creating awareness, mobilising, and equipping the Church for ministry to Muslims is the first aspect of ministry beyond the diaspora. The Church needs to educate believers about *what* Islam is, *who* Muslims are, and *how* to lovingly reach out to them in the neighbourhood, engaging them with the gospel. In many countries where Muslims are massively migrating, the Church is largely ignorant of Islam and Muslims' commitment to the *hijra* strategy of Islamic advance. This ignorance on the part of the Church, coupled with nominalism, is helping to advance the spread of Islam.

2) *Training churches to plant diaspora churches.* Churches that exist within migrant communities need to be made aware, envisioned, trained and charged with the responsibility of planting churches for migrants.

The majority of these migrants will normally not attend existing churches for many reasons. Many non-Muslim

migrants do not associate with any church. But this can change. One example of a church that is making this effort is the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. It is being trained to embark on planting Hausa-speaking churches all over Rivers State for northern migrants. The use of one vernacular language, Hausa, can reach many.

3) *Focusing on indigenous Muslims.* In every region, country and continent where there has been a large influx of migrants, there are *indigenous* Muslims (or people of other faiths). When Muslim migrants arrive in such places, they join forces with the local ones to strengthen the frontiers of Islam in the communities.

In ministry beyond the diaspora, Christians are envisioned, trained and mobilised to engage the indigenous Muslims with the gospel. For example, Igbo Christians in eastern Nigeria can be envisioned, mobilised and equipped to evangelise Igbo Muslims at home and abroad.

Diaspora ministry seeks to gather the displaced into the kingdom of God. It can be practised by individuals, churches and groups right where they are. It is *mission right where I stand*.

## Recommended Books

***Strangers Next Door: Immigration, Migration and Mission.*** J. D. Payne

***Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology and Practice.*** Enoch Wan

***Scattered to be Gathered: Ministry to Migrants.***

John Idoko. Available on <http://store.otakada.org>.

# MIGRATION AND MEDIA

## OPEN DOORS FOR THE INACCESSIBLE

**T**he name *dalmar* means “passing through lands”. It comes from the Horn of Africa, and describes those who are great travellers. Indeed travelling is part of the cultural heritage of this area. From a background of nomadic livestock herding, many men from the Horn of Africa take jobs as sailors or long-distance truck drivers across East Africa. More recently, years of civil war have caused many to flee and move around in search of a better home.

God is behind this migration! We read in Acts that God chooses where people shall live. Those who were once inaccessible are now within easy reach of Christians. Hundreds of thousands of migrants have settled in cities across North America, Africa and Europe. They are strongly self-sufficient people, conditioned since childhood to adhere to a religion that they did not choose. They’ve been taught to resist change, bringing societal pressure to bear on those who dare. This is an obstacle that makes them hard to reach, no matter where they live.

A global network of African Christians, along with cross-cultural workers is reaching out to this diaspora in their adopted countries. Learning their languages and cultures, they have given years of their lives to serve peoples from the Horn of Africa. Building friendships and providing services, such as teaching English and other skills necessary to survive in a new country, can take a long time. The workers are few – pray for more!

Technology has opened pathways to reach these diaspora people in their own language, no matter where they are found. It provides opportunities for Christians to witness boldly about Christ without the risks of doing so publicly or in person. Radio, websites and social media give people around the world anonymous access to God’s truth in the privacy of their own homes.



### The Voice of New Life

Founded by pioneer SIM workers, Warren and Dorothy Modrick, 40 years after their arrival in the Horn of Africa, the radio broadcast Voice of New Life (VNL) celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in February 2015. In terms of quantity and quality of contact with listeners, the last three years have been the best ever. VNL received more than 1,200 emails and phone calls or had personal meetings with more than 100 listeners, living in 20 different lands. Of these, 66 resumed contact after a gap of at least one year. Sixty-five of these people said they had trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Many who tune in continue to express surprise that there is “nothing wrong” with the daily broadcasts. The Bible is so different from what they had imagined, with nothing “infidel” in it.

A long-time listener and house church leader from a closed land wrote, “Today it is a Sunday, and I can imagine that you are worshipping in your church. You are fortunate because you have full freedom, which enables you to

worship God freely. Please do pray for us, so that we may also one day enjoy the same freedom that enables you to worship God without restriction.”

National believers also share God’s truth with their countrymen via The New Life website and its linked Facebook page in their own language. This provides answers, explanations and courses for those who request them. In 2015 a Qu’ranic teacher completed the first half of the online course “One God, One Way”. And that year Facebook posts during Holy Week reached more than 500,000! Following a condolences post commemorating the worst ever jihadist truck bomb in the capital city in mid-October 2017, **more than 60 Facebook messages poured in within three weeks.**

God is overcoming the obstacles – whether they be political, geographic, linguistic or cultural – that keep the least reached and hard to reach in ignorance of his good news. “The Emmaus road meeting with Christ for these people may seem to be in slow motion,” said the founder of the New Life website. “Please pray for the people on the road.”

*The author’s name is withheld due to security concerns. Feedback should be addressed to: [info@afriqo.org](mailto:info@afriqo.org)*

For more the story of mission among Somali, read the biography of the Modrickers, “The Hardest Place”.

**Technology has opened pathways to reach these diaspora people in their own language.**

# EMBRACING GOD'S

## IMMIGRATION POLICY

IN CHICAGO, USA



Ethnic America Network Summit in Chicago, USA

**G**od has an immigration policy with one sole purpose: to place people in locations where they can hear the gospel as they

have never heard it before. For more than 90 years SIM was sending missionaries from the West to Africa and other lands, then God started a work of moving the mission field to the West.

This led to the vision and formation of SIM's Ethnic Focus ministry, now called Culture Connexions. In the 1980s many Africans started relocating to the US. Their reasons included education, running from war and persecution, and seeking greener pastures. Though the mission field was right at their doorstep, many Americans had no clue how to respond. The Ethnic Focus ministry brought together seasoned missionaries who had worked in various cultures and could speak some of the languages of the immigrants.

In 1995, at the request of Ethnic Focus, my family of five was sent to minister to African immigrants in Chicago, a major city in the USA. We were sent by the Evangelical Missionary Society (EMS) of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), in Nigeria.

As we started connecting with Africans, we made some sad discoveries. Many who had arrived in the USA as believers were cut off from fellowship. Various reasons caused this, but the main challenge had to do with work schedules.

Most immigrants have only menial jobs, despite the degrees they acquired before their arrival. They have to work two or three jobs just to survive. There are more job opportunities at the weekends, and because they need the money to pay for rent, food and other necessities, and the classes they squeeze in, church is out of the question.

We met Elizabeth, who had not been to church in 12 years. Another person said he had not been to church in seven years. A Kenyan declared that no immigrant can

succeed in America and be a Christian at the same time.

Others we met did go to church, but not regularly. Some went to an African church that, sadly, mixes Christianity and African traditional worship. Our attempts to dissuade some from going to that church were unsuccessful. They preferred being with their cultural group, even at the expense of being taught bad doctrine.

Efforts to get African immigrants to attend the majority white churches did not work well, and connecting them with African American churches was even harder. So we started a monthly Bible study in our apartment, and the Africans loved it. It soon became a bi-

weekly Bible study and prayer group and outgrew our space. The members decided that it should convert to a church since they were benefitting spiritually and were able to connect with their people.

Apart from shepherding the church plant, we are engaged in evangelism

**He determined ... the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:26-27, NIV**



ZACHARY NELSON PHOTO

and discipleship, pre-marital and marriage counselling, hospitality, and training churches on how to minister to immigrants. Grace mentors among the ladies, imparting her cooking, cake decorating and sewing skills as she equips them to be godly women.

Ministry among immigrants is very challenging. We have to work around their schedules and go to their apartments. Some think they are doing us a favour when they give us a little time to talk with them or when they “visit” the church. We deal with last-minute cancelled appointments and no-shows. But sometimes our efforts result in salvation or the rededication of a life to Christ. Following are a few of the many examples we could share.

Moses was an officer with the Nigerian Airforce before relocating to Chicago in about 1990. When we met him, he was astounded because we speak the same trade language and come from the same area in northern Nigeria. Moses regularly abused his body through drinking, smoking and taking drugs. For more than two years I visited him every week to study the Bible with him. Eventually he rededicated his life to God, and became involved in the church. But occasionally he relapsed and struggled with old habits.

When Moses worshipped or prayed, you sensed that he was truly connected to God. He remarked that God had brought our family to Chicago just for him. He went to be with the Lord in

March 2015, just before his 59<sup>th</sup> birthday, and we buried him in Chicago.

Christine worked in the same store as one of our sons. He shared the gospel with her, and she accepted the Lord and started coming to church. It has been quite a few years now, and she is still going strong in the Lord and leading some of her family members to the Lord.

Rodney and Aaliyah were our neighbours. We had limited contact with them, but one day Rodney surprised me. He knocked at our door and confused me by asking if I was a spiritual healer. He and Aaliyah had been having marital problems, and she nudged him to seek help from us. They had been observing the high amount of traffic in and out of our house – couples, individuals, blacks and whites – and they imagined something spiritual must be happening there. I talked with him, and eventually Grace connected with Aaliyah. She was a devout Muslim, who saw a vision of Jesus Christ and gave her life to Christ. But she was not connected to any church where she could have fellowship and grow. We started building a relationship with the couple. Two years ago they relocated to Atlanta. We visited them recently and arranged for a couple who live nearby to study the Bible with them regularly.

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*Sunday and Grace Bwanhot are from the Muslim-dominated part of northern Nigeria. Both had Christian parents, and both accepted Christ when they were young. Sunday holds a BSc in economics and an MA in theology, and Grace is a home economics graduate. They have three married sons, who also serve the Lord, and four grandchildren.*



# DIASPORA CHURCHES ARE MOVING FORWARD GOD'S PURPOSES

PETER OYUGI

**W**riting from the UK, I can observe a steady increase in the number of African diaspora churches, or churches of Africans who have been scattered far from their homelands. I believe that God is using migration to allow the body of Christ to be present in countries where secularism and nominalism have led to a decline in church attendance.

African diaspora churches have diverse beginnings. Some have been intentionally planted, as part of the missionary effort of churches back in the continent. Others result from African diaspora peoples seeking to create worship experiences mirroring what they were used to in Africa.

Although there are genuine concerns about the theological orthodoxy of some African diaspora churches, many African believers have a deep faith and passion for God and his Word. They are happy to share their faith in Christ with those they meet. This is an important asset when it comes to taking advantage of opportunities to share the gospel. Being communal and people-oriented, Africans are keen to enquire about the well-being of their neighbours, pray for those in need around them and introduce them to the gospel of Christ.

Many African diaspora churches have an influence on churches back on the continent as well, especially where some spiritual oversight is provided by church leaders in Africa. These leaders visit the churches regularly, which exposes them to some of the challenges of living in the West. In addition, most diaspora Christians send financial support to their families back home, which helps to fund the ongoing work of the Church in Africa.

Diaspora churches are often seen as an answer to prayer for reversing the spiritual decay occurring in the West. However, sometimes such churches are

heavily focused on looking after their own members. Like many typical churches, they become preoccupied with sustaining the life of a local congregation – with its myriad concerns about pastoral issues, financial stability, and balancing life-work demands.

They can receive help in remaining missional by sending their leaders to consultations where mission needs and priorities are discussed and explained, and where mutual accountability is enhanced. There is need for a renewed understanding of the purpose and mandate of the local church to participate in God's mission, *missio dei*.

However, in many diaspora churches, global missions is seen as an activity for Westerners in particular – an assumption often learned in the churches from which they came. Although there is increased recognition in the global Church that mission is now “from everywhere to anywhere”, church leaders need to cast the vision for global mission, nurture believers in radical discipleship, and educate church members about their Great Commission responsibilities. Vision, discipleship and education all need to work together to ensure that diaspora churches live out their biblical mandate to participate in the Great Commission.

My vision for diaspora churches in the UK is to see them committed anew to being people of the Word and Spirit. I pray that they would hear what the Spirit is saying to them. They are surrounded by fellow diaspora peoples coming from places where they had no access to the gospel. Many of these newcomers are now searching for the truth because they have greater freedom to seek it. Meanwhile, many in the host culture live in ignorance of biblical truths and do not see the relevance of Christianity to their lives. They, too, need the gospel that these diaspora churches can proclaim.

A godly influence in such a maze of



Peter Oyugi

worldviews, cultures and opinions can only be achieved through a prayerful engagement with the Bible as God's complete revelation of Himself to humankind. Believers in diaspora churches need to be equipped to see their role as missionaries where God has placed them. In this way, they may be salt and light, and a witness of the resurrected Christ, who is both Saviour and Lord. This requires that they integrate into their new environment, pray for the peace of their localities, and indeed become people of peace where God has placed them. This is not easy in a political climate where immigrants are viewed negatively. Nonetheless, God is accustomed to using the weak things of this world to make his power known in reconciling rebellious humanity back to Himself through Christ. He can and will use his scattered Church to accomplish his purpose!

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*Originally from Kenya, Peter Oyugi leads diaspora ministry in the UK for Africa Inland Mission (AIM), focusing on the least-reached. In this role he works alongside UK churches to establish church-based outreach teams that will equip church members to engage cross-culturally with the world at their doorstep. Previously Peter led a church in London and was a student worker in Kenya. He is married to Cecilia, and they have two teenage daughters. Email Peter at....*



# CALLED

## DAPHNE KABEBERI

I was raised in Nairobi, Kenya, where I lived with my mum and two little brothers. My dad also stays in Nairobi, and I have other siblings in different parts of the world. Although I was raised in the church, I did not understand the gospel as a young child. I believed I was saved because I had recited the sinners' prayer, but I lived in a selfish and worldly manner, and didn't understand that I needed a Saviour. In high school I began to realise that I was looking for love in all the wrong places, and living as an enemy of God. So I began to seek to know Him better and strive for righteousness.

I studied Electronic and Computer Engineering at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Juja, near Nairobi. Towards the end of my time there, I did the *Kairos* missions mobilisation course ([www.kairoscourse.org](http://www.kairoscourse.org)). For the first time in my life, I realised that missions is for every believer, myself included. I saw that the Bible is one book of redemption, not random, unrelated stories. The costly reality of being a disciple literally grabbed me!

Suddenly I lost most of my desire for material possessions, and just wanted to reach the unreached with the gospel. I became a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church, where I heard solid expositional teaching. I began to understand the significance of the cross, and rely on the Holy Spirit's regeneration to live like Christ.

### Serving in Scotland

In August 2017 I left East Africa for the first time to serve in the UK, the land of the missionaries who first brought the gospel to Kenya! I'm now a Ministry



Intern at Niddrie Community Church in Edinburgh, Scotland. I serve with the *20schemes* ministry, which seeks to plant churches in the hardest areas of Scotland. I assist with immigrant outreach, do youth and children's work, befriend

**I'd be delighted to spend most of my time teaching women and children how to read and apply the Bible, and encouraging them to tell others about Jesus.**

unbelieving women in the community and do general jobs around the church.

When I arrived, I waited eagerly to be taken to the housing schemes, expecting to find filthy, dilapidated streets and accommodation. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that the

beautiful, orderly neighbourhood where I live and work is actually the schemes. The poverty here isn't so much on the outside as it is on the inside. Sin and its effects are evidenced in such things as difficult family situations, hostility to God, and foul language and behaviour.

One great encouragement and learning point has been seeing the amount of time and effort that goes into reaching unbelievers in Niddrie with the gospel. There are kids' and toddlers' clubs, an inexpensive café and attractive social events.

After seeing how little gospel witness there is here, I'd quite like to be a Bible teacher for the rest of my life. I'd be delighted to have a job where I could spend most of my time teaching women and children how to read and apply the Bible, and encouraging them to tell others about Jesus.

To learn about this ministry, visit [www.20schemes.com](http://www.20schemes.com).



# GO! NEWS OF AFRICA'S MOBILISING CHURCH

## Reaching the Indian diaspora in Malawi

"It's all about relationships," says Veronica, who heads up SIM's Malawi work with the Indian diaspora in Blantyre. Malawi's second city and commercial capital has a significant Indian population. Many businesses are owned and operated by Indians, whose families have been in the country for two or three generations. It's a diverse group, and that can throw up problems.

"India is a country of countries," says Veronica. "There is no single unifying language." Eight families and a few individuals regularly attend the Sunday afternoon fellowship group she and her husband host in their home. All are from different parts of India, and they speak six different languages. "The only way we can run the group is to have everything in English," she explains.

The group members visit each other's homes for meals or family celebrations. "We want to show God in our lives and, through that, inspire them to ask questions and open the door for us to speak about the Lord," says Veronica.

She has also started a ladies' group, which offers counselling and parenting courses. Parenting advice is very attractive to the Muslim and Hindu women. Many of them have young families, and some are struggling. "I share my values with them, and they ask where they come from," says Veronica. "So I tell them about the Bible, and God's plans for families."

It's a slow process, but it is starting to bear fruit. Veronica has linked up with a small group of Indian Christians who were meeting occasionally. The Sunday fellowship was established through these contacts.

"Many of the Indian Christians were surprised when they found me, a missionary to Malawi, working with them," says Veronica. "They thought I would be working only with Malawians! They were equally surprised when I started talking to them about the need to reach out to the Indian community here, and to share the word of God with them."

**"We want to show  
God in our lives  
and, through that,  
inspire them to ask  
questions"**

## Engage Programme in UK

Are you a pastor who feels God may be calling your church to partner with a UK church to help reach immigrants and diaspora in the UK? Are you a believer who feels God's call to step out in faith as a missionary in the UK? If so, the Engage Programme may be for you.

Engage works with churches from around the world to identify and train workers who would be suitable for placements in UK churches. Engage also works with UK churches to help them identify the kind of person they need to assist them to take the gospel to local cross-cultural communities.

If you would like more information about Engage, or just to talk through how it might work for you, then please email [engage@sim.co.uk](mailto:engage@sim.co.uk).

Engage Programme in UK video: <https://vimeo.com/255924497>

## Next Issue

We look at the children of missionaries. A missionary kid or "MK" lives a unique life between the home culture of their parents and the host culture in which their family serves. How does this both enrich and challenge missionary families? How can sending churches and mission agencies provide awareness, resources and support to families living cross-culturally.

## Let us hear from you

Do you have questions about this issue's theme or other missions topics? What subjects would you like AfriGO to cover? We welcome your input in order to make the magazine as relevant and comprehensive as possible. Please email [info@afriGO.org](mailto:info@afriGO.org) with your questions and ideas.



Photo by Don Ross III

## REVIEW

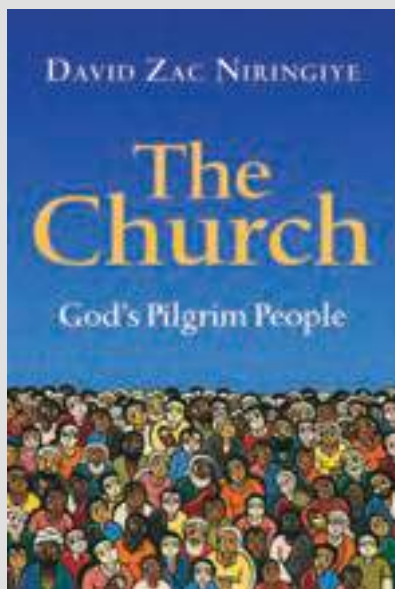
### The Church

#### God's Pilgrim People

by David Zac Niringiye

Published by InterVarsity Press, 2015

Written by the Rev. Dr. David Zac Niringiye, this book is a reflection on the state of the Church globally from the perspective of an African theologian, pastor, civic-political activist and missionary.



Niringiye is a restless thinker pushing us to consider questioning long-held views about the Church, its practice and structures. He challenges concepts such as “a sending church,” the kind of language we find in today’s missionary enterprise. As a Bible scholar, Niringiye explains passages of Scripture to help the reader reflect on what we experience as the Church today.

The book is full of anecdotes from his almost four decades of ministry across the globe. Niringiye is a natural storyteller, and makes the complex theological themes of the Church meaningful to readers. He takes us from his home country of Uganda to Rwanda, the UK, Australia, Kenya and Israel.

He does not shy away from difficult subjects, such as today’s relationship between Jewish followers and the Church. Niringiye points to Hebrews 11 and 12, joining both streams of the people of God, and – if the Lord tarries – future generations. The promise given to Abraham plays out in the formation of the kingdom of Israel in the Old Testament. The author takes the reader through that long history to the coming of Jesus and birth of the Church. He acknowledges the high position of the Holy Spirit as the One who energises the Church to fulfil its mission.

Niringiye challenges studies that teach that the Old Testament has

nothing to teach Christians about becoming Church. He urges readers to consider all the Scriptures in the quest to understand what it means to become Church. The Church is a community of faith, the author argues, and lives in communion with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Critical to this belief is the concept of pilgrimage with God that faces the temptation to domesticate the promise.

This book further clarifies the difference between the kingdom of God and the Church, emphasising the need for today’s Church to exhibit true koinonia, a word taken from Greek which refers to authentic Christian communion and fellowship. Given what we see around the world, that characteristic of God’s pilgrim people is lacking and is gospel communities need to work towards it.

*The Church: God's Pilgrim People* reminds readers of Christian communities that are experiencing persecution and suffering. Inspiring anecdotes help us grasp how contemporary Christians live as witnesses in these places.

Available on Amazon.

*Reviewed by Aggrey D. Mugisha, a Uganda-based Communications and Management Consultant*



# People Groups: SOMALIS

**A**lthough 99 per cent of Somalis are Muslim, and 90 per cent speak the same language, they are divided into numerous clan and sub-clan groups that have been in conflict for centuries.

The five-pointed star on the nation's flag represents the five colonial divisions. In 1960 the British Somaliland and Italian Somalia united at independence, and then tried to conquer the adjacent portions inhabited by Somalis within neighbouring Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. This led to a crushing defeat in the Ogaden War of 1977, followed by civil war.

Somalia was declared a "failed state" in 1991. Somaliland (formerly British in the northwest) broke away in 1992 and remains largely peaceful, while Somalia has suffered extreme violence and famine. The current government has gradually extended control with help from African Union soldiers, but over one-third of their territory is controlled by Islamist jihadists al-Shabaab. The still unresolved civil war led to a

global diaspora, with more than 10 per cent of the 15 million Somalis fleeing their homeland.

Somali people are livestock herders, and they enjoy the world's highest camel density. Camel milk makes it possible for nomads to survive two weeks away from wells. Commerce is also a key occupation. Many merchants and long-haul truck drivers across East and Southern Africa are Somalis.

Islam spread from Arabia in the eighth century, and by 1500 all Somalis were Sunni Muslims. Christian mission work began in the 1880s, and has faced significant challenges.

The people have long composed and appreciated complex poetry, with topics covering love, politics, war and peace. This poetic literature remained oral until the government imposed an official Latin orthography in 1972 for the Somali language. A national literacy campaign resulted in the remarkable figure of 25 per cent literacy. Providentially, these actions were made by the same government that had forced out missionaries.

## At a Glance

- Despite decades of civil war, Somalia has one of the most widespread telecommunication systems in Africa.
- Somalis have a deep appreciation for mass media: radio, websites, chatrooms and social media.
- Currently, less than one per cent of Somalis are Christians.
- The rapid increase in literacy facilitated the printing and discrete distribution of the newly-translated Bible and other literature.

## Ask God To:

- Lead Christians across the world to welcome Somali immigrants within their communities.
- Bless the formation of healthy house churches with inter-clan unity, both for the Horn of Africa and the diaspora.
- Help the Somali government restore control to all its territory, rule justly and allow religious freedom.
- Use Christian radio, websites and social media to help spread the gospel.



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