



GO INTO

Spreading the Gospel where it's thinnest

God is Seeking Muslims in NZ

“You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love them as yourself” Lev 19:34

Adam* came to New Zealand on a scholarship from a Middle Eastern country. While here he had a dream, in which Isa (Arabic for Jesus) appeared, telling him “I am the way,” and to seek out a friend in a church in Auckland to learn more. Adam had lots of questions, and stayed up late into the night for many nights talking. Adam became a follower of Christ, and is now back in his Middle Eastern home country spreading the Gospel at significant risk to his life. Just like Paul, he's suffered many beatings and scrapes with death, but God has preserved his life to testify to the grace of Christ.

Ibrahim and Miriam (Arabic for Abraham & Mary) also came from the Middle East to study here. They've been joining us for a Bible study. They're keen to better understand the lives of the prophets and Jesus. In the Qur'an many of the same prophets are mentioned but in lesser detail, providing a bridge to the Bible. It may take years for them to decide on a commitment, and there is much ground to cover.

Sadly, not all stories are so encouraging. Perhaps Ibrahim and Miriam will decide that the price to follow Christ is too much. Omar, once a regular, has stopped coming to the Bible study group. Abdul found Christ here, but has received death threats both within New Zealand and from family in his home country. The pain of disunity with previously close-knit communities and families is on-going, bringing Jesus words to life, “Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.” Matthew 19:29.

The more we as Kiwis understand these challenges, remain humble and interested in learning other cultures; being friendly to immigrants rather than being afraid, and inviting them into our lives, the more God can use us in the work He is doing in building His kingdom amongst our neighbours from a Muslim background.



Prayers at mosque in South Auckland

This is an encouraging, yet potentially heart-breaking ministry to be part of. It's exciting when we see God powerfully intervening, as when Jesus appeared to Adam. But these moments are interspersed with long slow conversations, misunderstandings, encounters with spiritual blindness, and uncertainty. It's a ministry requiring much time on our knees seeking God, as without Him nothing happens. It's a ministry that needs many more workers here in New Zealand. Would you pray about joining us? To know more, get in touch and we'll try and connect you with others in your area.

** Names and some details have been changed for security reasons*

Matthew & his family are currently serving Muslim friends in NZ, through practical assistance and contextualised Bible studies. Soon they're moving to Europe to be involved with migrant ministry.

Matthew & family



Turn and Face the Strange

With respect to David Bowie and this line from his song “Changes”, most would agree the face of mission is changing. Mission is now from anywhere to everywhere. For some this seems strange. Many have heard and understand the great needs of the remaining unreached peoples overseas. This should not be laid aside. However, our world is literally ‘ch ch ch’ changing before our eyes.

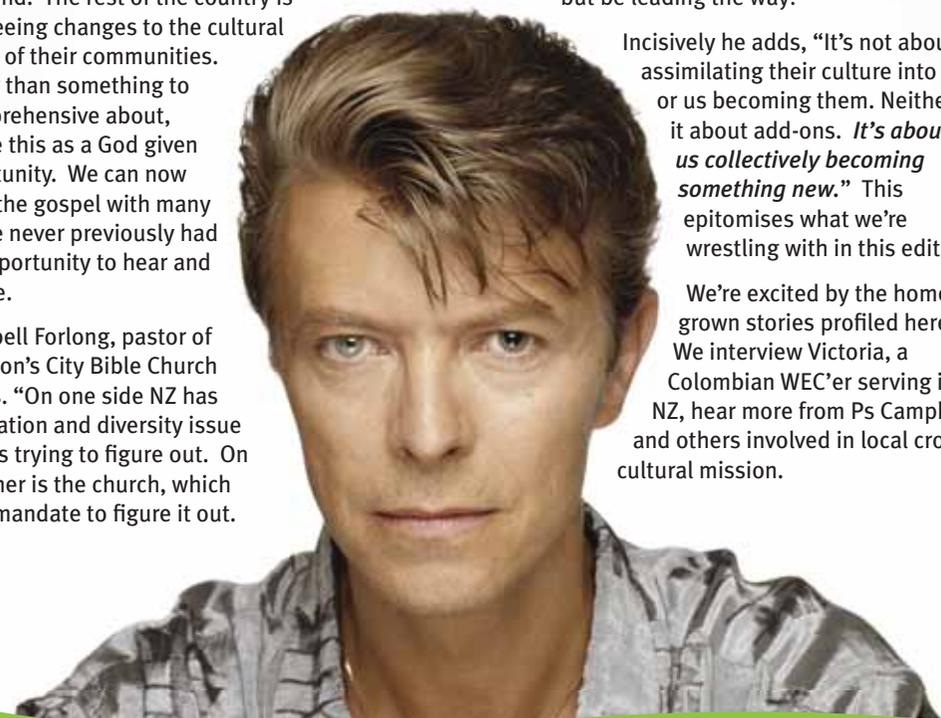
Super diversity is a term being used to describe Auckland. The rest of the country is also seeing changes to the cultural profile of their communities. Rather than something to be apprehensive about, we see this as a God given opportunity. We can now share the gospel with many who've never previously had the opportunity to hear and believe.

Campbell Forlong, pastor of Hamilton's City Bible Church agrees. “On one side NZ has a migration and diversity issue that it's trying to figure out. On the other is the church, which has a mandate to figure it out.

We should not only embrace this opportunity, but be leading the way!”

Incisively he adds, “It's not about us assimilating their culture into ours, or us becoming them. Neither is it about add-ons. *It's about us collectively becoming something new.*” This epitomises what we're wrestling with in this edition.

We're excited by the home-grown stories profiled here. We interview Victoria, a Colombian WEC'er serving in NZ, hear more from Ps Campbell, and others involved in local cross-cultural mission.



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iCuan hermosos son los pies...

“Beautiful are the feet...” so goes the Spanish of Romans 10:15. What began as mission steps to Latin America led to a NZ-based Latino mission bearer. We interviewed Victoria, our very own Colombian WEC missionary. Here’s what transpired.



How did you end up in NZ?

This is my long story short. I’ve had a sense of call to mission since I was a teenager. My church was planted by a WEC missionary and I was also disciplined by someone from WEC. After Bible College I served my local church, but I needed to improve my English to be more involved in global mission. God opened the door for me to come to NZ and study at Eastwest College on a scholarship.

After my course finished I either had to return to Colombia or God had to reveal another plan. I’d been helping another student working amongst refugees. They invited me to City Bible Church, Hamilton, where I met the pastor and soon got involved. The church offered me an internship, and I had my answer from God.

So what do you do now?

I’m predominantly helping migrant and refugee families. This is largely through CBC ministries like Converse (see Feature Page), but also connecting with other groups involved in similar work. My day can involve helping families with a variety of needs or appointments, English classes, translation work, or a Bible study in English for Spanish speakers.

What does a refugee family need most?

English is vital for all migrants here. Without it, everything from gaining employment to helping their children with homework is difficult. Learning to drive is very important for independence, and opens up

further opportunities. Most important is friendship - people they can be safe with and have fun with.

What about after a couple of years in NZ?

Needs remain, they just change. Many arrive without a father or husband, which can create issues. Often children’s English develops faster than parent’s. Family roles become inverted with adults becoming dependent upon their children. There’s also the tension on how to parent in a new culture, which the children are more familiar with. Forming good friendships is vital if immigrants are to become “Kiwis” and part of our communities.

Any final words?

There are lots of opportunities! If you’re thinking of missions in the future, don’t wait to go overseas. Join with like-minded people. Pray, discern, and learn together, and begin stepping out cross-culturally right where you are. You can’t imagine what God has in store, and how it will develop your faith. He is calling all of us to reach out to all peoples. It begins here, now.

Victoria serves on staff with CBC, Hamilton, in partnership with WEC NZ. Whilst having a soft spot for Asia and “Third Culture Kids,” she finds herself happily leading a vibrant migrant ministry.

Victoria



Bridge (in)to Cambodia

The elderly Cambodian man sat with his wife in the lounge of a Cambodian believer’s house, intently watching a chronological DVD presentation of the Bible in Khmer. As the DVD concluded he exclaimed, “This is the first time in my 70 plus years I’ve ever heard this.”

Cambodians first started coming to New Zealand in the early 1980s following the genocide under Pol Pot. Now there are over 6500 living here. They are a hospitable, hardworking people but are largely unreached with the gospel. Over four hundred Khmer families live in the Waikato alone.

Upon returning in 2009 from serving two years in Cambodia with WEC, we wanted to continue our involvement with Cambodians here. A Cambodian friend and I approached Cambodians in bakeries inviting them to come to English lessons. To our delight about ten Cambodians came on the first night.

After first meeting in a church hall, we now meet in the home of a Christian Cambodian couple each Wednesday night. This couple have a wonderful gift of hospitality, making people feel comfortable and welcome. Students from Eastwest College help with English lessons; not only meeting a felt need, but building bridges between the small group of Khmer believers and the Buddhist Community. For example, I first met Somnang and Chendah (not their real names) when a Cambodian friend and I helped them shift house. For the last four years they have been coming to English lessons. They started asking questions about Christianity and have built an enduring friendship with the Khmer believers. They now regularly attend fellowship group meetings and Somnang was baptised last year.



Although our Wednesday night lessons are not a Bible study, we take the opportunity to explain about the significance of Easter and Christmas and have literature available in Khmer. On some occasions the Cambodian Fellowship group invites friends from the English class to a special event. On one such evening I observed two of our Buddhist students leaning forward, listening with great interest as some Khmer Christians shared their story of coming to faith in Christ.

Cambodians are very group oriented and relational. A huge challenge in reaching them is their fear of being isolated from their own people and that Buddhism is part of their identity. We continue to pray that the seeds that have been sown over the years will be watered and bear fruit.

Are there ways you can love and serve people who are on the margins of society to build bridges and sow seeds that will point them to the Saviour?

After many years serving their local church, Gordon, Jan and their two teenage sons spent two years in Cambodia. They’re now on staff at Eastwest College helping others prepare for their journey in missions.

Gordon & Jan



Becoming Something New

In August 2005 Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast of the United States. It would become one of the deadliest and costliest natural disasters in America's history. Several hours away, Hamilton pastor Campbell Forlong had just arrived in Texas for a four-month sabbatical. Little did he know how God would use this tragedy to shape him, his family and the church they led.



The Beginnings of a Migrant Ministry

When Katrina hit, the Forlong's host Texas church was immediately thrown into action. Struck by the devastation and personal interaction with internally displaced people, God challenged Campbell, and later City Bible Church (CBC), with the question, "What do we value?" He notes, "At a time when values weren't really being discussed or trendy, I was wrestling with what it was to have a values-based life and entity. I wrote home to the elders and asked, 'What it would look like to shape our church community primarily around our values; not our vision, purpose or activities?'" Together they began to look afresh at the core of God's character, and settled upon six values – one of which was compassion for the needy. This formed the foundation for what is now becoming a multifaceted refugee and migrant ministry.

Stage One was to help members "Discover" each value, mining the Scriptures to see its truth. Stage Two was to "Experience" each value; to identify pathways where people could actually go and serve in an environment. Stage Three was to "Live Out" the value, where it literally becomes a normal part of one's life and identity.

CBC established Café Agora on the church's roadfront in 2008. When disaster hit in Haiti, CBC decided to use 50c from every cup sold for World Vision work in Haiti, and so a missional business took shape. They've continued to support a different charity every month since, the first one being sponsorship of an event for Waikato Refugee Services (now Red Cross).

God continued to introduce the refugee world to them in a variety of ways. Invited to a powhiri at the local refugee centre, Campbell prayed, "God, if you want me to form a new friendship with someone from a different land, I'm open." He soon found himself beside Abelardo, a Colombian refugee. A stilted conversation began, and seven years and many coffees later he and his family remain close friends. Abelardo introduced him to others in the Colombian community, and things quickly developed into family gatherings, social events, spiritual retreats, Christmas Fiestas, conversational English help and Spanish translation for enquirers.

Around this time Victoria, a Colombian undergoing English and mission training at Eastwest College, heard of and made contact with CBC. One thing led to another, and now Victoria leads the migrant ministry as a WEC missionary on staff at CBC - and so began Converse, a conversational English class (see article alongside).

While many ethnicities now attend Converse, its Colombian beginnings have also birthed a Spanish speaking faith community. Alongside monthly outreach services and live headset translation during weekly CBC services, all correspondence with them is translated into Spanish.



Challenges Along the Way

As always, close interconnected relationships are key. Yet many Christians are not confident enough to develop these relationships. "This is the new area needing development," says Campbell, "to equip more people to open their homes, hearts and mouths to actually be able to share, to multiply the effectiveness that a few are doing with a few." Even for the fully committed CBC'ers, who join with regular volunteers from WEC, Eastwest College, and rotating CBC Life Groups, this has been a challenge.

"To allow your home to become multicultural is a big deal," says Campbell. "The cross-cultural relationship demands a great deal more than what we're used to, or than our family can manage. Our church culture also needs to be open to and valuing the diversity of culture, yet this invades our comfort as Kiwis in a big way."

Such engagement is often costly. Some have been "burned" by experiencing ungratefulness in the face of generosity, even having things stolen from their home. CBC leadership has also fielded internal criticism. Despite the reality checks however, they remain committed to a value which the majority have embraced. Last year the vision statement for the church was rewritten to be, "To become a growing multicultural community, who love God, love each other, and love the lost."

What does it mean to become a multicultural community? "Because every culture has its own baggage," says Campbell, "it's not about us assimilating another culture into ours or vice versa. Neither is it about add-ons or extensions. It's about us collectively becoming something new."

Fortunately, intentionality doesn't demand hurriedness. Another CBC leadership mantra is "slow grow" - being in it for the long haul. The challenge is to get a critical mass involved, which involves the devotion of more human resources, particularly young adults who more naturally transition into becoming "lifestylers of multiculturalism."

A Word to NZ Churches



CBC isn't a unique scenario with unique resources. The following is what Campbell would say to other NZ churches.

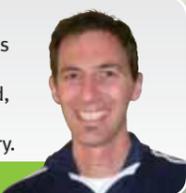
"There's a huge societal benefit from migration. NZ has long had multicultural elements, but it's as if we now have an opportunity to journey towards being a community that truly does value one another in diversity. The NZ church should not only embrace this opportunity but be leading the way!"

"Theologically this is what we should be doing anyway. It's God's idea from Babel to Acts to Revelation, and along the way we get to distill the essentials of our faith, to rediscover truth."

"One unexpected by-product for us was to see how it meshes into so much more of what we're about. We've always been a church with mission connections overseas. But it's as if mission makes even more sense now. Our overseas partnerships and initiatives seem to fit more naturally now that we have a local multicultural ministry."

"So often we need to go far, to better understand near. But let's not wait for the next mission trip to pray the mission prayers. Let's start now. Let's start near, praying for our workplaces and neighbours here. Let's work together to help people take courageous steps, to mobilise the body to reach the last, the least, and the lost."

Eric serves with our mobilising team here and abroad. He loves seeing people and churches engage with the mission of God, hence his excitement with this church-agency partnership story.



Eric

Want an opportunity to serve? But you only speak English? Don't let that put you off.

In Spain they're looking for help with homework classes for children and teens and need English speakers. Adult conversation groups also need English speakers.

We'll be needing some hostel parents and helpers down the track (later this year, or next) in Thailand.

Bourofaye Christian School in Senegal needs teachers. One opportunity is for a Geography teacher. English is fine in this context, though any French lurking in your background may come in handy.

A school in Central Asia also requires teachers. Following the U.S. curriculum, they need people with some IT skills, drama, history and music. Children are from kindergarten to year 13.

How about this opportunity in Gambia: "We're looking for people to join us in West Africa for a year. We've lived and worked here for more than 10 years living an incarnational lifestyle amongst a Muslim tribe. Help is needed in our home school adventure - could you help me in tutoring our 3 lovely kids (aged 7, 5, 2)? Assistance is needed in our agriculture/erosion projects and in training local boys in welding and fabrication. Requirements: 1 - Passion for God and people. 2 - Excitement to learn a tribal language and culture. 3 - Willingness to live with locals and work as a team."

English tutoring help is needed in South Asia working with children in boys' and girls' homes.

Finally, an opportunity in the Middle East for a year: help is needed with educating the children of expatriate workers of a hospital. Typically two teachers share this role teaching around 10 children in a two classroom schoolhouse; currently the need is for a teacher for the older primary children.

Are you up for something different next year? Give us a call and find out more.

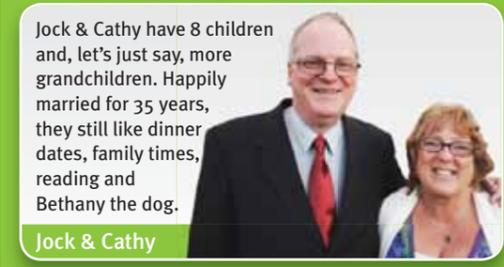
WEC has placements for a huge variety of team ministries and professions in 70+ countries. The opportunities here represent only a few examples among numerous possibilities. To search for more check out the weblink below. Better yet, call the team on 0800 GO INTO and get the full picture.

www.wecnz.org/get-involved

God changes lives, often in just a moment. When I was first in Bible College nearly 30 years ago, He showed me a clear vision of a man standing in a potato field. I saw it for only a moment, but it has remained vivid in my mind and helped direct my ministry ever since.

The vision first led me to pastor a church in Pukekohe, the potato growing capital of New Zealand. Later, as my interest in mission grew, to a potato field gifted to WEC in Gordonton. It's here that Eastwest College of Intercultural Studies and later our National Office was established, where I now serve as Director.

As you read this edition, can I encourage you to open your heart, allow God room to speak into your life afresh. What is He saying to you? Is there something that the LORD is speaking directly to you about? Can it be confirmed by the advice of other gifted, wise people? Does your church leadership agree? Be ready to listen and hear the voice of the Spirit as you reflect and pray about what you read. And if there is any way we can assist you in your journey, please feel free to be in touch. I, or any of our staff would be privileged to help.



Jock & Cathy have 8 children and, let's just say, more grandchildren. Happily married for 35 years, they still like dinner dates, family times, reading and Bethany the dog.

Converse: One tree, two fruits

Converse began as a conversational English class, based around topical felt needs. It now runs for 4-5 weeks each school term, attracting 40-60 people each night. It remains deliberately practical, free, and always includes the magic of food! Converse is much more than this, however. It serves the migrant and refugee communities through strong friendships, social events and periodic youth and women's initiatives. It's here that lives become truly interconnected and one on one relationships can develop beyond the classroom. Some have even come to Christ. The benefits though, apply as much to the helpers as they do to those who attend; like two sets of fruit from the one tree, as the following reflections show.



"It's broadened my understanding of refugees coming into New Zealand; how difficult and confusing it is for them to learn a new language, culture and way of life. I so enjoy helping in the friendly environment, and pray that through our genuine friendship they will see the love of Jesus." Meryn, Helper

"I've learned how important and valuable a ministry like this is. It's a time when they can naturally interact with Kiwis and share about themselves, even stories of loss and suffering. We're not an official behind a desk, and they're not trying to be understood. Instead we're all enjoying each other's company and sharing life together. Everyone desires acceptance and love for who we are. Our friends have found that at Converse, and so keep coming back." Elizabeth, Helper

"Students are attracted to the classes because they can practice their English. We even pick them up! I've enjoyed seeing previously shy refugees in animated conversations with Kiwis. Having taught English elsewhere, I know how common it is for students to be overly anxious about getting things right, or to defer to the more outspoken members of class. Here they're much more relaxed, and see it as a social highlight of their week." Gayle, Teacher

"I arrived in NZ in 2014 as a non-Christian physicist from Argentina. Victoria and Converse would change the story of my life for ever. She shared her faith, invited me to CBC, and introduced me to her pastor and friends. I learned so much from the people around me, about love and about the Christian story. Now I can say, 'Love + grace + forgiveness = Jesus. I was baptised just before returning to my country and am eternally thankful.'" Federico



You've read other's stories. Get cross-cultural training to create your own. Contact WEC NZ to book a workshop for your church. 0800 GOINTO mobiliser@wecnz.org

