

Monday 17th May

UK Muslims

There are large numbers of Muslims in the UK. The 2011 census put Britain's Muslim community at some 2.8 million people and it has only grown since then. Britain is home to one of the most diverse Muslim communities on Earth, with Muslims from all over the world having migrated here. The largest communities originate from South Asia, but there are also many Arab and African communities, as well as Muslims from South-East Asia, the Balkans and Turkey. There are also many Muslims who have converted to Islam from other faiths.

Muslim communities are spread throughout the British Isles, and are represented in all areas of British economic, cultural and political life. From small businesses to restaurants, from law and accountancy to IT, from the National Health Service to teaching, transport and public services, from politics and the media to sport, art and fashion, Muslims are represented in many different areas.

British Muslims are part of a young community with the majority of Muslims being under the age of 19. 47% of Muslims were born in the UK. There are 290,000 Muslims between the ages of 9-14 years old. 53.9% of Muslims are under 19 years of age.

- Pray for the many Muslims in the UK to get to know believing Christians who will bless them and share the gospel respectfully and lovingly.
- Pray for the many Muslim youth that they would not be drawn by the things of this world but would want to find out more about Jesus.
- Pray that the gospel would be spread through social media and the internet and that many would access it.

Information taken from the Muslim council of Britain: <https://mcb.org.uk/resources/british-muslims/>

Tuesday 18th May

Sarah's story

"God calls us to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Mark 16:15).

Frontiers shares many accounts of workers who have gone into all the world and preached and seen God act in marvellous ways. I'm not one of them!

Jesus reminds us that some are called to be sowers and some to be reapers (John 4:37). He suggests we start in Jerusalem (Acts 1:8) i.e. where we live now. Those of us who are in our 'Jerusalem' are as much called to be sowers as those who have gone 'to the ends of the earth'.

How do we do this? By befriending some of the Muslim people around us – our neighbours or our work colleagues, for example. We don't have to go far in the UK to find Muslims. We may not be called to go to them in their homeland but we are called to reach out to them in our homeland – which is now their homeland too.

My personal experience of this is mainly through my working life as a teacher in a school where some 50% of the pupils were from Muslim families. This gave me the opportunity to develop relationships with these families – a number of whom expressed delight that their children were in a class taught by a Christian (a lady of The Book, as they described it). There were opportunities to pray with mothers about their children and with a few about their personal circumstances too. You may have opportunities in your working life. Please take them!

Or maybe you're like a young friend who is shortly to be married and who, with her fiancé, is looking for a home in a strategic part of town where God can use them – their 'Jerusalem'.

So may I encourage you to be open to developing friendships with Muslims you encounter in your daily life? If God's plan for you is to stay rather than to go please recognise that this is your 'mission field' and that you can be a sower, or maybe even a reaper, where you are. It's often called 'friendship evangelism' and all of us are equipped to make friends just where we are."

- Let's thank God for Sarah and her faithful sowing into the lives of Muslims that God put in her path. Let's ask that He will bless Sarah's young friend and her fiancé as they look to sow in their own Jerusalem.
- If you haven't developed friendships with Muslims but would like to, ask God to put opportunities across your path in the days, weeks and months ahead.
- If you don't feel equipped to reach out and don't know what to say, ask God to help you and to give you the right words at the right time. (Mark13:11)

Wednesday 19th May

God at work - in the UK

Mahabba groups meet all over the UK and focus on praying for Muslims in the UK. This is one Mahabba group's story:

"We started our Mahabba group in 2018 following the Open Doors 'Month of Ramadan' prayer initiative. At that time we had a godly gospel-centred Syrian refugee family with us who had been following Jesus for several years. We felt we wanted to support their outreach among the Arabic speaking community, and that the best way would be through a Mahabba prayer group.

Furthermore we had garnered interest among folk at church who had a leaning towards Internationals Ministry, who had also been very active in our Ramadan prayer.

By the time we started we had four Iranian Christian asylum seekers in our church who were anxious to join any ministry that was working with believers from Muslim background. The first meeting, which was hosted by our Syrian family, was less of a formal 'British' prayer meeting, and rather a Middle Eastern time of fellowship involving, testimony, singing, food and prayer. The prayer focused in small mixed groups praying in their own language, for families in their home country, salvation and courage in Home Office interviews.

After a couple more meetings we had as many from Muslim background in the group as the English (roughly ten and ten). They came from Syrian, Iranian and Kurdish backgrounds. It was felt it was

very much their meeting which I co-ordinated. The English were getting a taste of the Middle East, which by this time included singing and Arabic/Farsi TV and more food than you could shake a stick at – it became a God-given social highlight for them.

We continued to see numbers of believers from Muslim background grow. We started to run weekly Bible studies, one for beginners (Mark's Gospel) and the other for people who'd been with us a year (Genesis). Our Morning and Evening services were translated live through wireless head sets in Farsi.

We thank God for his grace – we took up the 'Ramadan prayer initiative' because we thought it would be a good thing to do – but to be honest, not with any great vision. God answered our prayers anyway and brought more asylum seekers to our church. In his goodness the Lord also gave us a couple of believing Farsi translators – who had a vision for God's work. Without their gifts we would have struggled to communicate effectively. God also touched the hearts of the English people in the rest of the church who opened their hearts, homes and wallets to needs. It was this as much as anything that grew relationships and gave us retention and growth.

Today, I'm writing in lockdown. We can't have such social gatherings (although it doesn't appear to be stopping some in spite my protestations!). Nevertheless, we have managed to master Zoom meetings with various success (not everyone has WiFi – sometimes it's a matter of what we prioritise data allowances for). And one of the blessings that has come out of this 'Exile' is that although many of our former members got moved out of the local hotels to around the country – we have been kept in touch via Zoom every week, feeding these new believers with the Word of God. If it were not for lockdown – we certainly would not have been thinking about continuing our teaching with them. Therefore, we are considering how we can keep the relationships going when things open up again."

<https://www.mahabbanetwork.com/resource/god-at-work-in-the-world-lks8s>

- Pray for new believers in Jesus from a Muslim background, that they would be strengthened and encouraged in their faith.
- Pray for more churches to develop a heart for praying and reaching out to Muslims.
- Pray for asylum seekers and refugees across the UK to hear of the hope that Jesus offers.

Thursday 20th May

Lost, asleep & on the wrong path: a story from an Iranian living in the UK.

"Hello everyone, I was born in Iran. I thank God that he hasn't left me lost and asleep on the wrong path. From childhood I was brought up as a strict Shia Muslim however I always felt weak. I used to pray and worship but I wasn't able to reach God in the way I wanted to.

I was always looking for a God of love and friendship and so finally I decided to look for God in another way. For this reason I started looking into Sufi Islam. I felt I was lost and I was looking to find the right way. Many times I went to Sufi meetings however I was still not satisfied.

When I had a problem with my job, I decided to go into a church and light a candle. After a few days, the problem was solved. A short time later, when a different problem arose, I had to leave my country.

When I arrived in England, I got to know some new Iranian Christian friends and I got a lot of information from them. Little by little, I began to feel that following Jesus was a better way and understand that Christianity is a complete way to reach God, until God accepted me and I came to faith in Jesus.

I understood that all my life I had been following the wrong way and that there was no other way than following Jesus to reach the God of love because all the other ways put distance between me and God. However, following Jesus enabled me to become a friend of God. Now I am a son of God and he has become my Father – I'm not a slave of God.

The teachings of Jesus have taught me about life and how to live in love. He taught me how to relate to people around me, who I used to think were my enemies, and be at peace with them; how to live in freedom and help others to live freely too; how to find when Satan was working against me; how to put to death my selfish pride; that God is a God of love we can relate to, not a God of fear.

He answered my childlike questions and gave me a new outlook. Through my words, those who oppose the Gospel can understand and get to know God, whether they've had information before or not. The Lord's return is near and he has given us a great responsibility to go and make disciples of all the nations, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus, I confess that I'm a sinner. I know I cannot attain salvation and become righteous through my own power or good works. I believe you were killed on the cross for my sins, were buried in the grave and after three days you rose again from the dead.

I believe that you're alive and have the authority to forgive my sins and count me righteous before you. I surrender my whole heart and life to you. Thank you for hearing my prayer, Amen."

<https://www.mahabbanetwork.com/blog/lost-asleep-on-the-wrong-path>

- Pray for the many Iranians who have come to the UK as refugees or for work, that they would meet Iranian believers in Jesus and listen to their stories.
- Pray for the many Iranian believers that have found faith in the UK, that they would be strengthened and encouraged in their faith.
- Pray that these Iranian believers would be bold to share the truth of Jesus with their families and friends in Iran.

Friday 21st May

Hope & healing: a true story about a church in the UK welcoming their community into the church.

"About 75 people came to our church event for people of other faith backgrounds. It was lovely to see about fifteen Muslim women there in their hijabs. Other less religious Muslims were also there and many Hindus. All invited by Christian friends.

The whole evening was very enjoyable and peaceful. People stayed for a long time even though we were very challenging in plainly sharing the Gospel with them, but in a gracious way.

We began with refreshments, and a fun quiz. This was followed by a free halal and vegetarian meal. After this we gave the quiz results and prizes.

We then gave a fifty minute presentation on the theme of hope. People listened attentively to someone from a Muslim background sharing his testimony of coming to faith, boldly and lovingly.

There was a short talk on the reasons for our Christian hope. This was followed by an invitation for prayer for healing. Two healing testimonies were shared, one of a healing from a cyst. Later a lady came for prayer with the same condition.

About 25 to 30 people came forward for prayer for healing. There was a queue!

One person said their post cancer operation pain had left. Another who had pain in their foot said it was gone.

All the guests stayed well past the finish time as we ended the evening with coffee and cake.

Lots of people came at the end and said how much they had enjoyed the programme. We are now planning our next event!"

<https://www.mahabbanetwork.com/blog/hope-healing>

- Pray for this church and the Muslims that they ministered to, that they would see many find Jesus.
- Pray for more churches to boldly and graciously witness to those in their community of other faiths.
- Pray that Muslims would feel welcomed into churches and would encounter Jesus through the lives of Christians as they attend parent and toddler groups, English classes, community events and celebrations.

Saturday 22nd May

The UK Church

This week we have heard many stories of how the church in the UK is praying for and reaching out to Muslims, and of how many Muslims are also seeking after Jesus and finding him. It is amazing to hear these stories and it would be wonderful if many more churches were inspired and felt able to reach out to Muslims in their communities. Take some time today to focus on your church and your local area and pray for them.

- If your church is already reaching out to Muslims, pray blessing on this and pray that many would find Jesus and accept Him as Saviour.
- If your church is not reaching out to Muslims, pray that your leaders would be inspired to do this. Pray for people willing to gather and pray for local Muslims as a first step.

- Pray for any Muslims in your local area, that they would meet Christians who would share Jesus lovingly and respectfully with them. Pray that God would open their eyes and hearts to the truth and that they would be bold to seek after Him.

Mahabba groups meet all over the UK and focus on praying for Muslims in the UK. If you are interested in joining a group, you can view their website here:

<https://www.mahabbanetwork.com/find-a-group>