

March-April 2015

Early in March Priscilla and Aquila, together with their AIC colleagues, held the inaugural AIC church service in Bethany. We sent delegates to join them on that historic occasion, and rejoiced in the Lord's work in that deeply Muslim town.

Our students continued to hone their cross-cultural teaching skills both in the high school and through the storying projects. Peter's Christian Religious Education class grew from three students to nine, and one teacher. Thirteen friends and neighbors were now reading the Scriptures regularly with us. We continued to ask the Lord to give us twenty who would read Scripture regularly with our team in their homes. Three storying groups were gradually coming together, despite challenges in the logistics of gathering regularly.

One of the men in a storying group was a friend of Joseph's. As he maneuvered his motorcycle through treacherous mud one day, he fell and injured his knee, severing an artery. Joseph rushed him to the hospital, fearing for his life as his blood flowed. As he was taken into surgery, he regained consciousness for a few moments and said in English to Joseph, "Pray for me!" "I PRAYED!" Joseph recounted. And the man's life was spared. In fact, his recovery was astonishingly quick. He was attributing his deliverance to the Lord's healing in answer to Jeremy's prayers. His interest in the Bible grew as he began realizing these were not stories but histories.

We all carried written Scriptures with us wherever we went, as well as recordings of the stories, and people found it fascinating to have something to read and talk about rather than just village gossip. A neighbor woman was pregnant with her first child, and every day she asked me to come share another story. The day I shared the story of Christ's birth, she interrupted me a number of times to guess what came next. At the high point she said, "Oh, then Joseph rushed Mary to the hospital and she had the baby far away from her mom!" When I explained that Mary did not have her baby in a hospital but in a stable, she commented, "Oh, that reminds me of my friend who got a motorcycle taxi to take her to the hospital when she was in labor, but the baby came too quickly so she had it on the road." I felt like laughing, but I loved it that she understood Jesus' birth actually happened on a day in history.

On Good Friday we joined Ruth and Esther at their house for a special celebration. Fred and Emma came, and a couple of the Christian schoolteachers. We reviewed a number of prophecies of the Messiah, took communion and washed each other's feet, as Jesus did for His disciples on the night He was betrayed. Easter morning we met at Joseph and Mary's house for our "normal" worship service. Four Christian guests joined us, and three Muslim men. That afternoon each household chose a way to reach out to their friends to celebrate Easter. I asked Ruth if she would come help me serve a big feast to our neighbors. They were slow in coming, so after praying with Colin, I went around to everyone's house. "Please come eat this food! It is all ready and I need someone to come eat it and help us celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead!" The appeal roused them from inertia, and a large

group of women and children came. Colin spoke. He began with creation, then told all the stories we had chosen and had been sharing for the last few months that showed our need for a Savior. He ended with Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection.

A delightful thing happened. The women and children spoke up to help Colin tell the stories. Those who knew them started "helping" him, adding details they loved, making sure the others knew about things Colin might be leaving out or not explaining clearly. It became a group project, very satisfying to those who got to participate, very eye-opening to those who realized they were left out because they had not gotten to hear the stories yet. Then we sang a song or two, and ate the feast. As the afternoon grew dim, the women reminded Colin of a Tanzanian custom that they wanted him to do as the host before the party closed. He began a little speech: "We all came together. We told the stories of the Bible from creation to Christ's resurrection. We sang, we ate good food, we enjoyed the time together." They answered with satisfaction, "Yes, we did," and the party was over. The next day two women came to read Bible stories with me, and while together, one actually began teaching the other how to read. Please, she also asked, while I was out of town for a while, could I lend them my Scripture recordings to listen to?

