

**Reaching Muslims through friendship;
New book is tool in Muslim ministry**

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Muslims living in the United States are open to friendship with North Americans and by implication some are open to the gospel. So says Yusuf Abdallah, who is serving among the large Muslim population in south Florida.

“They are very open to share because they have a feeling that American people don’t understand them or are angry with them because of what is happening around the world,” Abdallah says.

Many Muslims are also open to discussing matters of faith. “People of a religious frame in this secular age love to meet with people who believe in prayer and who believe in attending worship services,” he observed. “We don’t have to bring up the subject of faith, they understand that we are Christians from the very start. As they talk about their faith, we are able to share with them about ours.”

Abdallah says that persecution, misunderstanding and even death threats work to keep many from making a public profession of their faith. “I think that there are some who are secret believers who do not dare show it,” he says. But, “there are those who are interested and there are those who study the Bible.

While there is a spiritual movement among some Muslims in the U.S. and there is a church fellowship being formed by one group of Muslims in Miami, Abdallah says he does not know of any mass movement toward conversion. “There are those who become Christians, but they are few. One came to a pastor in a local church asking to be baptized, another was visited by the Lord in his room one night and he realized that this was an answer to a Christian prayer.”

Muslims are a fast-growing segment of the U.S. population. Abdallah estimates that between 20,000 and 40,000 live in south Florida. There are also a growing number of Mosques, some of them in a home or a store, while others are located in beautiful, large buildings.

Abdallah, who became interested in working with Muslims during missionary service in the Middle East, says he uses friendship as a door to witness. “We are alert to Muslim people wherever we are. They are very open to friendship if you just go up to them and say ‘I can’t help but notice, are you from the Middle East or the Far East?’”

“The Lord has guided us many times to places where we were able to pray for people. The Lord has a way of guiding us to those he knows will be responsive,” he says.

Abdallah has just written a book that he says will give Muslims a chance to learn about Jesus. It will also allow them to compare what the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an, says about Jesus to what the Bible describes. He hopes that it will be useful as well to Christians who need a resource for working with Muslims.

“There are lots of books that tell friends how to witness; there are very few books that are a witness themselves. That is what this book is trying to be,” he explained. “Our book is an attempt to begin where the Muslim person is and to lead him to consider the whole story of Jesus,” he says. “You don't need to be a theologian to understand what is being said.”

Titled “Jesus Gives Peace; Jesus in the Qur'an and the Bible,” Abdallah's book is available for \$7.50, including postage, from Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami, FL 331512.

Among the topics in the book's 23 chapters, Abdallah explores “Women's Place in Life,” “Peace-Salam in Jesus,” “Who is Jesus,” and “Mary is Not Divine.” “The Muslim people are very interested in Mary,” he says. “We agree with the Qur'anic statement that Mary was just a woman, that she was not divine. We point out her willingness to submit herself to God for whatever his will for her might be.”

Abdallah says that the chapters about the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus are unique because they present a view different from that of the Qur'an. “In the Qur'anic view, Jesus appeared to die on the cross, but was taken up into heaven. The Muslim people have theories about who died in Jesus' place.”

The last chapter of Abdallah's book begins, “Listen, Yusuf Abdallah, I've read your book. So what?” He says that the chapter reflects a Muslim's response to everything he has read in the book and answers questions that might be in the reader's mind. “The Muslim offering is primarily a set of teachings from a book they consider holy, The Qur'an,” he says. “What we offer is not a doctrine, but a person. While we hold to the Jesus of the Bible, it is the Jesus in our heart, corresponding to the Jesus of the Bible that makes him real to us.”

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