

DAY 2: MISSIONARIES WELCOME EFFORTS TO PUSH BACK DARKNESS

The mission strategy of Henderson Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma was forever changed when its missions pastor read a statistic: “5 percent of missions work is done in North Africa and the Middle East [NAME].” After reading this startling fact, Mike knew the Lord was calling him to lead his church in changing the statistic in its mission strategy.

“As I read that statistic, it just hit me,” he said. “I looked at the missions team at [our church] and realized we weren’t even doing 5 percent of our missions work among NAME peoples. I knew that had to change.”

Otis Neumann*, a missionary with the IMB’s Northern African and Middle Eastern Affinity, appreciates the advocacy of Mike and his church.

“His vision has inspired others, including Hispanic churches and the Oklahoma Baptist Convention, to make NAME peoples a priority for prayer and missions work,” Otis said.

For two years Mike and the missions team prayed about a specific unreached people group. Along with a team from their church, Mike and his wife traveled to Europe in 2012. They met an IMB missionary, who gave them a glimpse into how God was at work among NAME peoples there.

Otis said going to Europe first to connect with immigrants from NAME is an effective way for churches to develop a love for the people and make them a priority in their missions vision.

“Europe is a modern crossroads of people from Northern Africa and the Middle East,” he explained. “From Europe, SBC churches have the unique opportunity to partner with IMB and share the gospel with people who come from some of the most difficult-to-access places in the world.”



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There are 505 million people living in Northern Africa and the Middle East. Within that population, there are currently 531 unengaged, unreached people groups.

Two years after their trip to Europe, Mike and his missions team made their first trip into Northern Africa. Since that first trip, the church has sent multiple missions teams every year. They focus on building relationships, prayerwalking, and meeting community needs.

In February 2020, the church sent a missionary couple from their church to Northern Africa to serve with the IMB. Even during the height of the pandemic when travel was restricted, the church looked for ways to support the work overseas through prayer and encouragement.

Otis and other missionaries pray for more churches to be bold in their missions efforts.

“When churches partner with IMB, we can do more together—and there is so much left to do in Northern Africa and the Middle East,” Otis said. “Today, there are many people groups living in places where we cannot yet directly engage them with the gospel, but through prayer, we can press forward into new places and push back the darkness as the light of the gospel is proclaimed to every people group of NAME.”

PRAY God would call out more churches to join the work to reach NAME peoples with the gospel.

PRAY for more long-term missionaries in the fields among the unreached.

PRAY the light of Christ would break the barriers that keep many from hearing the gospel.

**Name changed.*

- **LEAD WOMEN ON MISSION:**
- Use with meeting plan on pages 6-7 in *Women on Mission Leader* (Winter 2021–22).