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# MERF News

December 2024



Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

“Faithful, Fruitful and Cost-Effective Indigenous Missions!”

## Fruitful Fourfold Ministry



Augustine Programme grads - MERF-Lokichoggio, Kenya Centre

The Lord has continued to bless MERF’s gospel ministries, enabling and supporting faithful indigenous Christians in Arab and Muslim lands. MERF’s four-fold ministries are **Evangelism, Church Extension, Biblical Training** and **Diaconal Aid**.

### Evangelism & Church Extension

MERF partners with faithful local churches, supporting evangelists active in remote areas of North Africa, Ethiopia and Indonesia. Bibles and sound Christian literature are distributed along with gospel witness and personal visitation. In Indonesia, after school programmes, in a variety of localities, bring the good news to children and families from many different backgrounds.

The life-changing gospel message reaches the countries of whole regions by MERF’s radio and internet ministries in native languages. Radio outreach is best suited for rural and less developed areas and often preferred by the older generation. MERF gospel broadcasts reach out in 6 major Indonesian languages and four major East African languages: in Ethiopia - Amharic, Oromo and Somali and to South Sudan - Nuer. MERF’s largest and farthest-reaching radio ministry is in the Arabic language, reaching the 22 nations of the Arab League and beyond. Listeners’ responses are followed up by text, telephone, literature and visitation.

In urban and more developed areas, MERF’s internet gospel programmes reach much more widely

than radio, especially to the younger generations. The Farsi gospel ministry is carried out exclusively over the internet. It connects interested Farsi-speakers in Iran and elsewhere to solid Bible teaching. In most Arab and Muslim lands, churches are few and far between. So, the wonderful news of salvation has been largely inaccessible and unknown. Now, at our websites and through social media, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, native language MERF gospel messages are available to millions all around the world. Many thousands access the message of God’s saving grace in Christ in their own tongues. Thousands respond. Hundreds inquire further. Scores express serious interest and many come to faith in Christ. Also, the internet enables MERF

follow-up teams to speedily reply to messages with friendly encouragement and answers to questions. Interactions often continue for weeks and months. The teams patiently seek to nurture new believers, who need opportunities for fellowship.

### Biblical Training

To God’s praise the church is now growing by leaps and bounds in Arab and Muslim lands which had long lacked a faithful Christian witness. Yet, the acute shortage of spiritual leadership able to teach God’s Word makes the church vulnerable. To build up and equip pastors, elders and other church leaders, solid Christian literature is freely given out over the internet. *MERF-ArabicLibrary.com* distributes thousands of titles.



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Under current economic conditions, most could not afford the luxury of buying these books. Valuable titles distributed this year include: *What the Bible teaches about the Trinity* by Stuart Olyott, *A Study in Eschatology* by G.I. Williamson, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Explained and Applied* by Gareth Crossley and newly published in Arabic include: *What is Faith?* By J Gresham Machen and *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture* by Edmund Clowney.

Some MERF radio pro-

grammes are especially designed to ground believers solidly in God's Word who live in remote areas without regular teaching, such as Nuer language Shorter Catechism programmes for South Sudan. Learning the catechism, some basic English and recommendation by the home church qualify South Sudanese of various tribes and other East Africans to join the free intensive 3-month Augustine biblical training programme at MERF's ministry centre just south of the South Sudanese border in Lokichoggio, Kenya. For over 20 years, three times a year 20 to 25 trainees, mainly from rural churches, receive an overview of the Scriptures, in-depth study of foundational Bible books and learn inductive Bible study and preaching and teaching skills. This is done mostly through *Augustine Programme curriculum*. Faithful, experienced volunteer pastors and teachers travel to Lokichoggio or other MERF fields to serve as guest instructors. They teach 2 to 4 weeks on behalf of supporting churches.

*Please encourage qualified pastors and Bible teachers to consider volunteering for these vital training efforts.*

After receiving further theological training, last year two Tanzanian Augustine programme graduates translated the programme into Swahili and established a one-year course for Tanzanian church workers from remote areas. The Lord has blessed. The second class graduated this month. Already the 25 places are nearly filled for the third class beginning in January 2025. Additionally, the Augustine programme has been modified for use in Ethiopia. It is also being translated for use in Indonesia as of February 2025.

*As there are so many training opportunities, pray for the Lord to provide two English-speaking Bible teachers -- one to reside in Nairobi for East Africa and one in Jakarta for Indonesia.*

## Diaconal Aid

Famine, war, natural disasters and persecution displace and create need beyond the means of local churches in Arab and Muslim lands. MERF teams up with the volun-

*"This is the Lord;  
We have waited  
for Him;  
We will be glad  
and rejoice  
in His salvation."*

– Isaiah 25:9b

teer efforts of national Christians to practically express the love of Christ to the needy, along with the gospel, first to those of the household of faith and then to others (Galatians 6:10). In Ethiopia, every year MERF helps individual Christians and five or six churches get back on their feet that are displaced by persecution. MERF also provides school supplies to needy children who would otherwise not be able to attend school. However, this year wars created the need for multiple diaconal aid projects to serve the neediest displaced or suffering from churches in Sudan and in southern Lebanon and Bethlehem, Palestine. Food, household supplies and blankets have been distributed.

*Thank you for your partnership in gospel ministry to Arab and Muslim peoples through MERF.*

## MERF-Australia

Rev Chris Athavle (Chairman), Rev Terry Flanagan (Clerk),  
Rev Dr Peter Barnes, Mr Mark Alcorn,  
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[merf@merf.org.au](mailto:merf@merf.org.au)

## MERF-New Zealand

Rev Kenneth J. Campbell (Chairman), tel 021 296 3789;  
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[newzealandcouncil@gmail.com](mailto:newzealandcouncil@gmail.com)



*In Indonesia MERF afterschool programmes bring the gospel to children and families from many backgrounds*