

clearing stones

The Clark family live in a poor undeveloped country in the Middle East where the main religion is Islam. In the last 20 years the country has been propelled straight from the Middle Ages into the age of technology, embracing mobile phones, the Internet and satellite TV.

The Clarks – Bob, Sue, and their two young children, Peter and Julia - are based in a city of around 500,000 people. Bob is the English Director for a language school where he looks after 100+ students, (foreign) teachers and (local) secretaries, and, along with the rest of the management team, keeps busy with administration, recruiting, and development. Sue, a Nutritionist, home-schools Peter and Julia, is involved in micro-businesses and recruiting, and has plans to make further use of her nutrition training.

God highlighted the Middle-Eastern country to Sue and Bob the day after they became engaged; it was poor, had lots of problems, and, until recently, off the beaten track of the majority of

mission endeavour. Although they sometimes find the cultural practices frustrating, they enjoy the pace of life and the fact that they are serving the wider community by being part of the body of Christ rather than ministering individually.

“We have learned HEAPS living here! Scripture comes alive in so many ways, because outside the cities the culture is still very similar to life in Biblical times: houses built on rock, women at the well, goats that look like sheep etc.”

They have also discovered that corporate witness is a powerful tool in a restricted access country where they can't share directly.

“Much of our time is spent living our lives as an open book; the way we live is far more powerful a witness than doing outreach and discipleship alone. Many aspects of our lives are closely watched, especially our interactions with each other.

“Locals do not understand that what they see on TV (it's typical American TV off the satellite) is not what followers of Christ are really like. They are taught so many untruths about the Christian faith that they are seriously perplexed when they watch us living out Christ-like lives, living by biblical values. Followers of Christ do love their children differently and husbands and wives do treat each other differently; we have a greater level of trust and love within a Christian community. This speaks VOLUMES in a society where abuse, lies, inequality and mistrust is the norm.”



They are also encouraged by a new God-inspired awakening amongst the local MBBs (Muslim background believers). Previously, foreign workers have primarily been utilized by MBBs as a source of money and a means of escape from the country – but now MBBs are seeking out leadership training, discipleship, ways of earning more money to support their fellowship, and reaching out to their friends and family. Locals are meeting together regularly for Bible study, worship and fellowship. It is too dangerous (for the MBBs) for foreigners to be directly involved in these groups, but they help by providing resources, and by being prayer magnets for this emerging church that is constantly persecuted and being infiltrated by government spies.

“The work we’re doing in our country has been described as the stone clearing phase. There is a degree of openness, but it’s a long process and it’s early days yet.”

Sue and Bob are enthusiastic about seeking new recruits to serve in the Middle East: “Come and

do a short trip and serve in some small way. The practicality and versatility of Kiwis is renowned on the field, so don’t disqualify yourself before you try - you might discover that you love it! You don’t have to be a super-saint, just available and willing to learn!

“You’ll also get a crash course in God’s training as He teaches you more about yourself and the body of Christ. Quite often we go overseas with an attitude that we are going to do a lot of wonderful work for God, and forget that maybe God has some special work that He’d like to do in us!” ■

For security reasons, names and some details have been modified.

Support and Prayer

We like Interserve’s support system and its attitude that works and words go together. Many people on the field see the words as much more important than works, but Interserve believes in working with the local church and partnering with other groups in order to transform communities.

The support (financial, moral and prayer) we receive from Interserve and home is SO important! Prayer support is vital: we notice the difference in our level of coping and in how much ministry action we are able to do, depending on how much prayer support we are given. Weird things start happening when our prayer support goes down.

