



صدائے ایمان

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND FREEDOM

Mission Statement

*We are sharing awareness with the Church and the love of Christ
with Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities.*

January, 2016

Volume 2, Number 1

*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
Romans 10:17*

IN YOUR PRAYERS . . .

Because we know prayer makes a difference, we ask that you keep praying for the missionaries of *Voice of Faith*. Pray that they will experience God's love and grace increasing in their lives and work. Also, pray for God to protect them from any harm.

Board President, Joan Cioper

Board of Ambassadors and Counselors

Rev. Dr. R. Scudieri, Rev. J. Lawson, Rev. B.J. Lieske

Contact Us

4150 Goodlette Road North, Naples, FL 34103

818-945-8542

yourvoiceoffaith@gmail.com

www.yourvoiceoffaith.com

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

2016 – A New Year has begun! My wishes to you are for a Happy and Healthy New Year! God is good because He will be working in many hearts as the Gospel is preached or shared.

Children and youth will eagerly listen to those who know the Lord Jesus as their Savior. From young ages, they learn that at Christ's birth, God came to earth, He grew up, and as a grown man, He suffered, died and rose again from the grave to be the Savior of the world. *Voice of Faith's* missionaries enjoy sharing with youth and young adults, because they need Jesus and they are our future leaders and parents.

Thank you to our very faithful friends of *Voice of Faith* for your financial pledges and contributions! The prayers you lift up to the Lord are so much appreciated.

We are looking forward to a very successful Fundraising Luncheon to be held on February 18, 2016, at the Hilton Hotel, 5111 Tamiami Trail N, Naples, FL 34103, at 12:00 Noon. The luncheon is free. For reservations, you may contact joan.voiceoffaith2020@gmail.com.

I am praying that you will be encouraged by this newsletter's stories. May the Lord greatly bless you and thank you again for your support of *Voice of Faith*.

In Christ, Joan Cioper, President

AZAN IS PRAYING IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

You may recall Azan, a Muslim youth we introduced to you two years ago and with whose family we have been meeting. Azan sang 'Amazing Grace' with me at our Christmas Dinner a year ago. Now, he is eighteen and attending college.

Thanksgiving Day is celebrated by American believers in the true spirit of thankfulness. Immigrants, who are not believers and who do not know the importance of the day, just treat it as an ordinary day with their ongoing activities. Christians from South Asian countries celebrate Thanksgiving as Americans do, but perhaps in a deeper sense, because in America, they have freedom to exercise their faith.

We have Christian friends in the greater Fort Lauderdale area with whom we celebrate Thanksgiving. We also ask our Muslim, and Hindu friends to join us. This past Thanksgiving, when the dinner was ready to be served, the host asked me to say the blessing, praying for the hungry and the poor around the world. As I stood up to pray, Azan, whose family was part of the group, came to me asking if he could pray

to bless the food. I had no choice but to let him pray. In my heart I was thinking, "How is he going to pray? Does he remember the words we shared with him in past months? After all, he does not believe in God." We had shared much with him and prayed often. So, Azan started praying exactly as we had been praying with him. To everyone's surprise, he ended the prayer, "in the name of Jesus."

Azan's family and the others were surprised and asked his parents, "Why did he pray like Christians, with his eyes closed and ending his prayer 'in Jesus' name?" (I mention here that in Islam, praying with closed eyes is **Haram**; meaning disliked or forbidden.)

Here is the point: Muslims believe that we all believe in one God. Do Christians believe it, or not? We will leave this question open-ended until we release the interfaith Bible study we are preparing. As an end note: we have a few South Asian Christian teenagers in the same *Voice of Faith* Bible study group that Azan is in and they have been supporting and mentoring him.

AZAN CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS WITH CHRISTIAN FRIENDS

Thanksgiving and Christmastime bring about opportunities for interfaith harmony and interaction in our midst. Christians invite their Muslim friends to events, which gives us time to share our faith with them. During December's period of Advent, *Voice of Faith* arranged a Christmas dinner for our Sewing Circle Women's Bible Study Group, the Bible study group for the men, their families, and other Muslim, Hindu and Sikh friends. We came together to celebrate the birthday of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Even though Azan's family is not a part of any of these groups, we asked them to join us. Because Thanksgiving had been a big day for us and for Azan's family, they accepted our invitation.

Now, get ready for a big surprise! While I was preparing the table and while the guests were enjoying the Christmas decorations, Azan secretly came to me and said, "Auntie, can you please call me when dinner is ready? I will pray again;" and then he quickly returned to the group so his family and Muslim friends did not notice anything unusual. To us, this was an indicator that Azan and his family were ready to accept their son's act of praying in the name of Jesus. We invited Azan to come forward to bless the food. Again, he prayed, closing in the

“name of Jesus Christ, Amen.” This was a test for his family and for us. We now had to decide whether or not to approach the young man about his faith. We do not want to show disrespect for the parents, who are our friends. This time, the reaction to his prayer was not so obvious. As dinner was being served, the youth members of the Bible study started singing Christmas carols and Azan joined them in song. It was a joyous occasion.

You may be wondering, isn't this the time to ask Azan if he is accepting Christ as his Savior and if he wants to be baptized? But, no, you can't react to this like you might react in a real estate deal: showing something extraordinary to the client and then quickly asking for their decision to buy it. No, now is the time that we keep praying for Azan. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to prepare Azan for accepting Jesus Christ in faith.

Azan... Azan... Azan... Are we only going to focus on him today? Is it important for us to remember to leave the 99 behind and to search for the one who strayed, who is weak, the one who doesn't believe there is a Good Shepherd? Remember the parable of the 99 sheep and the Shepherd? We know the 99 in the church who are saved, but there's that 'one' who needs love and caring, and who needs to be brought back so they can see that Jesus is the loving Shepherd. Will Azan accept Jesus as his personal Savior? Yes, it is possible, as we have seen many come to Jesus when they meet Him personally. Please continue to pray for him and his family. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS FOR LIZZY AND HER FAMILY

A year ago, we mentioned the Naheem family: mother, father, two daughters, and a son. They moved from England to New Jersey and then to Florida. They came to the United States because of the changes in all of Europe. Mr. Naheem once said, “It's changing so much, it is more like living back home! We don't want to raise our children in that kind of culture!” Mr. Naheem is a liberal man, educated in a Missionary school in Pakistan. He wants his children to make the best decisions. The girls are happy and excited about living here: a life of freedom, a place where they can have more choices and make better decisions. They are adapting very well and making friends with Christian girls. In contrast, their son, Najam, does not want to immerse himself in modern culture, but instead, he is focused on becoming a devout Muslim, following the strict laws of Islam. He started to notice his sisters making friends with Christians and those of other faiths and this bothered him. We have invited them to our Bible studies in Boca Raton, but Najam only attended one time. We respect and understand the differences and he does the same. He is a nice young man, very respectful to his parent's friends.

Najam recently graduated from a university in Miami and was offered a good job in Houston, Texas. It didn't make his parents happy that he would be far away, yet they want him to be successful and allowed him to join this company.

There, Najam met an American-born Texas cowgirl; a beautiful, blue-eyed, 20-year-old girl called “Lizzy”, short for Elizabeth. Being in love, Najam asked his parents if he could bring her home to meet the family at Thanksgiving. We met Lizzy at the Thanksgiving dinner (the same one at which Azan prayed). The celebration was different than any she had ever experienced. She seemed comfortable with the food and the clothing worn by the guests. She raved about how loving and caring everyone was.

The older people of Najam's family kept calling her “Lazy”, and she had to keep correcting them. Jay was sitting next to her at the dinner table and started a conversation with her about her family and her friends in Houston. She was not happy or proud of her family, but had praises for Najam's family. Her father, an airline employee, and her mother, an RN, work to provide for their family of five, including Lizzy.

I approached Lizzy later while she was sitting at poolside. She was admiring how the Pakistani women dress and mentioned that she was looking forward to a colorful wedding celebration of her own. She asked about our background as Pakistani Christians. I never miss a chance to speak to youth who are running away from their own cultures, becoming the victims of misunderstanding or just being confused. Youths of non-Christian faiths, when approaching American youth, tell them that they believe in Jesus Christ, too. Lizzy was convinced by that statement and said, “Americans have to learn from Pakistani Christians and Muslims. They both worship the same God and there is no difference between the two.” This statement opened the door wide for me to explain the difference between the two faiths, what the Qur'an says about Jesus, and what Muslims believe about Jesus. Now, she had questions about interfaith relationships. As we were talking, Najam came over to us and asked Lizzy to join the rest of party, where there was music and dancing. Najam probably suspected that I was talking about my faith with Lizzy, for his sisters attend our Bible studies.

Later, as I was helping my friends in the kitchen, I noticed that Lizzy kept looking at me. I knew she still had questions, and I knew that confusion and doubts were in her mind. Eventually, she came to the kitchen to help with the dishes. She told me that her emotions were all mixed up, but she also said that she doesn't need to leave her faith to

adopt his culture. She did take my phone number and the next day sent me a message that she wanted to talk. We stayed in the Fort Lauderdale area, hoping that if she called we would be more readily available to meet with her. And Lizzy did call. Najam was spending time with some of his school friends. She wanted to meet with us to talk more about interfaith relationships. She wanted to understand more about Najam's faith as well. It went well as we discussed her questions for over an hour.

You could imagine the conversation, as she was learning the facts. She is a smart young lady, studying Engineering. She is in love with Najam, and was hoping to introduce him to her God. But the next day did not go as smoothly as she planned when she tried to talk to Najam. Najam wanted to focus on his strict lifestyle. The rest of Lizzy's vacation time, she frequently asked me for advice on how to approach him in Christian love and kindness. It didn't work, and she left a day early to return to Houston.

It had been two weeks since we began praying for Lizzy and there was no news from her. In the third week of Advent, she called us and related that she and Najam were no longer a couple. It was decided that an unequally yoked marriage would not last long. Lizzy had ended it all feeling good, whereas Najam was unhappy and angry. Lizzy's mother called us and thanked us for our support and for helping to make a difference in their daughter's life.

Christmas is about the promise of God, and we wait for our Lord Jesus to come. Christ did truly come to Lizzy this Christmas. It was a joyous Christmas for her whole family and there is celebration in heaven above for Lizzy's return to her Father's loving arms.

Let us pray for our youth to be protected from the deception of false religions.