

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

*A STUDY OF EASTLEIGH FELLOWSHIP
CENTER'S MUSLIM -YOUTH MINISTRY
METHODS FROM A CHRISTIAN
CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE*

BY
WAIRIMU KAMAU

*A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master
of Arts in Missions*

JULY 2005

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July 2005

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

A STUDY OF EASTLEIGH FELLOWSHIP CENTER'S
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FROM A CHRISTIAN CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

I declare that this is my original work and has not been
submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical
Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners.

Wairimu Kamau

July 2005

ABSTRACT

Eastleigh Fellowship Center is a Christian social service that serves the neighborhood of Eastleigh. It has been operating for the last twenty-six years and has established itself as a unique cross-cultural ministry in Nairobi. It is a favorite recreational and instructional center for hundreds of Muslim, Ethiopian and Kenyan people who frequent its premises and is said to be known as far as the Middle East. This study sought to describe how the center used its activities as part of its Muslim youth ministry methods, what impression of Christianity that made on them and what implications for cross-cultural mission arise out of that understanding. To do that effectively in a sensitive cross-cultural setting, the researcher used library research, participant observation and ethnographic interviews for data collection purposes.

The researcher concluded that the provision of social services is an important preliminary step in cross-cultural mission because it provides a natural environment for interaction. In addition, the higher the level of interaction in the provision of social services, the greater the opportunity for relationship building. Most importantly, the building of relationships based on trust is important for the creation of an environment within which meaningful cross-cultural dialogue can occur. Sports and recreation are important evangelism tools. For that reason, Christian ministries need to view sports not as time-wasting child's play but as the fertile ground for nurturing and discipling believers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Quite clearly, the center could benefit from training in cross-cultural ministry skills through support by other established Muslim evangelism ministries.

A number of other study topics arise out of this investigation. The Kenya Mennonite Church is in the process of taking on the full responsibility for the work of this center. They could benefit from an understanding of how an urban church can effectively reach Muslim people. Secondly, sociology of language scholars could investigate the relationship between language patterns and cultural transformation in this setting and its influence on Muslim evangelism. Another area is that of the theology of urban youth music. Young people provide a window into their world through music. This would help enhance our understanding of their worldview with a view to providing holistic and relevant ministry to this age group. Finally, the People of God office could benefit from improved use of the wide array of data available on their work if they could be equipped to employ more analytical methods of data presentation.

DEDICATION

To Christian ministries devoted to the enhancement of cross-cultural understanding

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their support in this important chapter of my life. To my Savior and Lord Jesus Christ who shepherds me gently and firmly- May all honor and glory be to you. To my family Dado, Mark and Vicki- May the Lord reward your patience for my many days buried in books. To the youth and staff of Eastleigh Fellowship Center- I salute you. Thank you for sharing your lives with me and teaching me what it means to minister in the city. To the Missions Department faculty and students of Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology- Thank you for reducing my ignorance about Muslim people.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFC	Eastleigh Fellowship Center
EMM	Eastern Mennonite Mission
FOCUS	Fellowship of Christian Unions
NEGST	Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
POG	People of God

GLOSSARY

Allah- The Muslim name for God.

Baraka- Blessings from God.

Haji- The pilgrimage to the Ka'bah in Mecca.

Hijab- The veil worn by Muslim women.

'Eid-al-Fitr- The three day festival of Muslims starting from the first day of Shawwâl, the month that follows Ramadân immediately.

Fitr- Literally means "breaking the fast." Muslims fast the whole of Ramadân, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and when Shawwâl comes, they break their fast.

Imam- The head of the Shi'a Muslims who traces his genealogy to the Prophet.

Injil- The Gospels

Insh Allah- God willing.

Isa- Islamic name for Jesus Christ.

Jihad- Striving in the path of Allah.

Jinn- Evil spirits.

Ka'bah- The house of God in Makkah in which there is a sacred black stone towards which all Muslims face when they pray.

Kafir- One who according to Muslims has lost his faith.

Khatib- Special mosque functionary who normally delivers the sermon.

Maruhani- Muslim jinn considered to be benevolent, powerful and godly spirits

Mashetani - other ordinary jinn considered to be malevolent spirits

Madrassa- literally, "to study," Islamic religious seminary.

Nabi- A prophet of God who proclaims the will of God.

Qur'an- The revelation of Allah's word that was given to Muhammad.

Ramadhan- The Islamic month of fasting.

Rasul- The apostle of God through whom God reveals a Book.

Salah- The ritual prayer in Islam.

Sawm- Fasting.

Shahada- The Muslim creedal witness: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Apostle of Allah."

Subha- Muslim prayer beads.

Sunna- The way or practices of the Prophet.

Surah- A chapter in the Qur'an.

Taurat- Arab equivalent for Hebrew Torah which is the law of Moses.

Waganga- Muslim shamans who work as priests for folk Muslims in their quest to deal with their problems

Zabur- Arab equivalent for Hebrew *Zimra* which is the Psalms.

Zakat- Obligatory alms.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1978, David W. Shenk, his wife and four children moved into Eastleigh to participate in an experiment that attempted to bring Christians and Muslims into dialogue and understanding through inter-community relationships. This attempt was based on his intuitive conviction that God would bless this interfaith understanding because there were many similarities between Christian and Muslim expressions of worship and community living. He was particularly concerned with the plight of the young people in Eastleigh and hoped that the center would nurture them into useful members of society through social activities (Shenk 1977, 1). He later reported that following the success of this experiment; a similar center was opened in Garissa in 1982 (Shenk 1977, 21).

Twenty-six years later, the Eastleigh Fellowship Center (EFC) is a beehive of activity with main hall used for private family functions, weekday language and high-school classes and church services on Sunday. The center houses a basketball court that is used for volleyball, netball and tennis. There also are gymnasium services, which consist of weightlifting, aerobics and Tae Boo. A nursery school is housed on the ground floor. A visitor to this center will notice the presence of a large number of young people congregating in the basketball court where many teams practice for competitions. EFC has for many years used its premises to reach Muslim young people and its fame is said to have spread as far as the Middle East.

This center is a program of the Eastern Mennonite Mission. A brief history of the Mennonites states that they originated from an Anabaptist reformer, Menno Simons (1495-1561), who renounced Catholicism in 1536 in Netherlands. Mennonite Christians hold that believers enter the state by natural birth, and the church through new birth. The church consists of those who are walking in the resurrection of life. Consequently, the church is a fellowship of love where men and women love the Lord and one another. Christians turn away

