

"Go into all the world and preach the good news..."
(Mark 16:15)

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An update of the various
missions endeavours supported by
Hillview Baptist Church

September 2020

The Ministry to the F*Ibe People - Part One

For several decades now a small group of F*Ibe Christians have faithfully laboured to reach more of their people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But with very limited resources, extreme opposition, and constant political and social unrest among them, the progress has been very slow. But this faithful group of believers is determined to reach as many of their people as possible.

So to start with, who are the F*Ibe people?

With a population of over 30 million, the F*Ibe are the largest unreached semi-nomadic people group in the world, found in at least 17 different West African countries, with the majority located in Nigeria. Other countries with a significant number of F*Ibe are Senegal, Guinea, and Cameroon. They are mostly cattle herders and tend to live in small villages. They share a common language (Fulfulde), have a similar culture (17th century Islam), are almost exclusively Muslim, and share a common ethnicity and lifestyle. Above all, they are loved by God and need to hear the good news of salvation.

Several decades ago, our NAB Conference came alongside this group of believers in Nigeria and committed itself to assist them as much as possible. In our initial relationship with them, several North American missionaries - such as Dr. and Mrs. Allan Effa - worked with them, but because the missionary personnel had of necessity to be deployed in other areas of ministry, the direct ministry to the F*Ibe was regrettably suspended. But this did not deter this small group of Christians, because in spite of being on their own and facing tremendous opposition and persecution, they were determined to live out their Christian faith and share the gospel with their Muslim neighbours. Then a number of years ago one of our NAB pastors - Rev. Jeff Kilmartin and his wife Sonya - re-established ties with this small but faithful group of F*Ibe Christians in Nigeria. They realized the tremendous challenges these believers faced, and the very limited resources they had to undertake a concerted outreach ministry to their fellow F*Ibe people. They were especially moved by the unbelievable opposition and persecution they faced, with a number of them having already died for their faith.

Pastor Jeff thus began to encourage a growing group of friends and churches from among the NAB Conference to help support these F*Ibe Christians in their outreach ministries. For many years the Northern Alberta Missions Conference (held annually in Edmonton) was actively raising financial support for the Christian F*Ibe in Nigeria. With the dissolution of the Missions Conference in 2014, a new way of supporting and promoting the missions efforts of the F*Ibe Christians was needed.

Thus under the leadership of Rev. Kilmartin, the Friends of the F*Ibe Society (FFS) came into being in 2014. Its purpose is to promote and financially support this ministry among the F*Ibe. At this point, the FFS is still largely a local group of individuals and churches, although there are supporters in several other regions in Canada, the US, and West Africa. There is also an Edmonton-based Executive Committee which oversees and directs the activities of the FFS.

Right from its inception, Rev. Herman Effa and I were members of the Executive Committee of the Friends of the F*Ibe Society. When Rev. Effa recently resigned from the Committee because of health issues, Dete Klingbeil from Hillview was willing to take his place. Other members of the Executive Committee are from various local NAB churches. Rev. Kilmartin served as its chair until two years ago when he and his wife Sonya were appointed as NAB missionaries to Cameroon, with one of their responsibilities being to serve as a liaison to the leadership of the F*Ibe Christians in Nigeria. Mr. Bernie Lemke, who has ministered in Nigeria on numerous occasions, is currently serving as the Committee chair.

The leadership of the F*Ibe Christians in Nigeria has established the New Dawn Initiative, and through this outreach program it seeks to minister to the F*Ibe people through (a) education, (b) community development, and (c) evangelism. Because of the positive benefits these efforts have brought to the general F*Ibe population, the F*Ibe Christians are receiving growing acceptance. While the local F*Ibe Christians will carry out this three-pronged work, the Friends of the F*Ibe Society, is partnering with them through consultation, prayer, and financial support.

More specifics on the F*Ibe ministry in the October issue of *A Missions Moment*.

Kurt Redschlag
Chair, HBC Missions Committee