

# GO

Lives and  
communities  
transformed  
through  
encounter with  
Jesus Christ

Issue 1  
**Feb 2024**

 **Interserve**



## GROWING RESPONSIVENESS

Responding with agility  
wherever God leads



**Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.**

Proverbs 19:21

**T**he start of the year is a natural time to look ahead. We might often pray, "Lord, guide our steps" and that is a good prayer. Sometimes, though, I think we need to ask, "Lord, where are you going, and how do we follow in Your steps?" This edition of GO is all about responsiveness. It is one of our strategic intents – to grow in responsiveness. Ultimately, that means our capacity to respond to what we discern God is doing. Where is God opening doors that have appeared closed in previous generations? How can we adjust our plans and processes more quickly to keep in step with Him? How can we better equip those in the Interserve community to respond when one door closes and another one opens, resulting in a change of ministry or even country?

God is trustworthy, it is His purposes that prevail. We are not simply the victims of circumstance in a volatile world. As you read the articles in this edition, praise God for His faithfulness and pray that we might all keep in step with Him.

**Chris Binder**

National Director



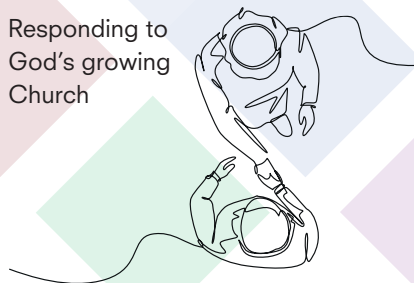
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# A willingness to obey

**EXPERIENCED INTERSERVE PARTNERS ALLEN AND LIZ RECENTLY MOVED TO A EUROPEAN CITY TO SERVE REFUGEES WITH THE 'PEACE HOUSE'.**

**T**he hospitality spaces looked lovely. In the midst of autumn, we had decorated with hues of gold, copper, tangerine and rustic brown. Tables were set, games prepared, coffee made and volunteers were waiting, ready for whoever walked through the door.

The Peace House is a refurbished tavern, located about twenty minutes walk from a large refugee camp. It is managed by our partner organisation—a group that has set up similar facilities throughout this nation in response to the massive influx of asylum seekers. Decorated in Middle Eastern style, there are plush cushions scattered around the walls, Persian carpets, and plenty of treats to please Eastern palates.





We are newcomers to the Peace House, although our association with it began more than a year ago. It started with a 'Macedonian call' we heard at an international conference:

**The number of refugees in this country is more than we can handle. Can you come and help?**

Initially we thought, "What a marvellous opportunity for Interserve! Surely there are experienced Partners who will jump at this!" Yet it soon became evident that, actually, it's people just like us that are needed at the Peace House: people who can be mums and dads, aunties and uncles, and brothers and sisters to refugees. And so, step by step over the past twelve months, we have made the decision to stay at the Peace House for the next two years.

◆ **To be responsive means to be available and open to change.**

During our years of serving God overseas, we've learned that responsiveness to His voice requires an ear tuned to the Holy Spirit and a willingness to obey without delay. Lengthy forethought and careful preplanning can easily become synonyms for procrastination, and procrastination is a recipe for lost opportunities. From the outside, responsiveness may look flighty — "Why can't they just settle in one place?!" — but to be responsive means to be available and open to change.

Our first group of three Iranian men entered the Peace House door just a few minutes after opening time. They were closely followed by four more Iranians, three Afghans, a Moroccan man, then

a husband and wife with their two boys. The volunteers rushed into action, offering tea, coffee and snacks, pulling out chess and other games, offering colouring and art activities. At one point, an Afghan man was teaching two Iranians how to do calligraphy! Someone took three guys into the kitchen where they learned together how to make scones.

At dinner time, eighteen people sat around the table giving thanks to God for His abundant provision. Five different languages were being spoken, yet everyone had a marvellous time, joking, laughing and gesticulating! At the end of the meal, the Parable of the Sower was shared in simple English while one refugee translated it into Persian and another into Arabic.

At one point during the evening, looking across a room full of engaged and animated people, I found myself smiling broadly. This is why we're here. This is what being responsive to the Holy Spirit has done. It has given these harassed and helpless people the opportunity to experience homelife again; a chance to eat a family meal with friends; a chance to share hospitality together and receive Christian love. These simple joys, that are so often taken for granted, are being soaked up by our refugee friends. And in the process, they see and experience Jesus in action. What a privilege! ◆

Are you interested in **working with migrants** from Asia and the Arab World, overseas or here in Great Britain and Ireland? Contact us via [start@interserve.org.uk](mailto:start@interserve.org.uk)



# Responsiveness

## A strategic priority

**DUNCAN OLUMBE, INTERSERVE'S REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR EURASIA, SHARES HIS REFLECTIONS ON WHAT IT MEANS TO GROW RESPONSIVENESS IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD.**

One thing that the Covid-19 pandemic taught us is that the only constant is change. With global pandemics, regional wars, and astronomical technological advances, our world is becoming more unpredictable than ever. We live in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world. Contexts are changing overnight. From visa regulations to global migration trends, the need for responsiveness and agility cannot be overemphasized.

At the heart of growing responsiveness is a desire to go where God leads us. Having clear plans is important, yet we are called to hold these lightly. We must trust God to direct us sometimes to uncharted territories. We desire to be more agile and responsive in following the Lord's leading in ever-changing situations where we are currently serving, and into new and emerging contexts. Given the



fast-changing realities of the places and peoples we serve, this is an urgent priority. Some ministry opportunities can come and go very quickly.

## RESPONDING TO POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

Visa complexities are one area where we must respond in new ways to changing circumstances. In some countries there have been no visa concerns for a long time, with Interserve Partners even able to stay and serve for years simply by reapplying for tourist visas. However as political situations change, this is no longer guaranteed. A large thriving country team in one region is currently facing an uncertain future, as nearly half the team have had to leave the country due to work permit extension requests and visas being denied. Individuals and families are forced to leave their homes with little warning, while those remaining in the country face increasing anxiety as they get closer to renewing their visas.

Those affected are having to consider alternative approaches to their ministry. What is the Lord saying to them, and us, in this situation? Is it time to explore ongoing ministry to the peoples of this language group while residing in neighbouring countries which are still more open to granting visas? Are there new opportunities for virtual ministry, for Partners who have returned to their sending countries to continue to minister online and in already-established relationships via Zoom? Or perhaps some forced to leave may explore the possibility of short bursts of ministry by making multiple short-term trips each year on tourist visas? While Interserve continues to place a high value on long-term (even

lifelong) mission service, we are on a journey of faith as we prayerfully seek God's leading on how to respond to these emerging realities.

## RESPONDING TO GLOBAL MIGRATION

The global migration of peoples of Asia and the Arab world also presents increasing complexity. For a while now we have ministered to migrants on our doorsteps and across various established migration routes and locations, especially across Europe. We have seen huge growth in the Great Britain and Ireland (GBI) country team, based on the growing numbers of Asian and Arab migrants in the UK. Similarly, we have placed Partners across Europe serving along the established 'Refugee Highways', places like Lesvos in Greece. However, migration experts are pointing to the increasingly fast-changing dynamics of migrants. Nowadays many migrants are only in one location for a very short time before their asylum status is confirmed and they move on or relocate to new migration corridors. If we are to keep pace with these realities, we need to become extremely agile.

## SEEKING FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS TO SERVE

Our topmost challenge to being super agile is in how we recruit new Partners. From initial application, checks and preparation through to being ready to begin an overseas placement, recruitment is an important process and not something to be rushed. However those who wish to work with migrant groups may find that these groups have already moved on or changed location during the course of their application process. How can we recruit and place

people faster without compromising on the necessary screening and preparation? The Great Britain and Ireland office are seeking to embrace new pathways that address this challenge, simplifying the Partner recruitment process and financial contributions, so that we can effectively welcome new Partners more quickly and with a flexibility that acknowledges their increasingly varied circumstances and ministry opportunities both in Great Britain and Ireland and overseas.

This challenge of responsiveness is particularly important for younger generations, many of whom are more attuned to agility and often value the flexibility of short-term commitments. Many Millennials and younger Gen Zs want to make a difference in the world and are keen to respond more spontaneously. In the aftermath of last year's devastating earthquakes in Turkey, would a more responsive system have allowed us to channel their immediate availability? What lessons can we learn from more agile mission organizations such as Operation Mobilization? Are there things we could adapt while maintaining our defining niche of sending professionals to serve in God's mission?

How do we balance between urgency and longevity? Interserve's International Leadership Team have recently identified an urgent need to bring on board more Partners from the younger generations into the fellowship. We are committing to prayerfully explore more creative ways of recruiting and integrating younger Mission Partners as we move towards a more intergenerational organization.

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With this in mind, we are also exploring the possibility of developing 'agile and transient' teams with less roots in a specific host country. These teams would be set up to move more easily and quickly, at a moment's notice, to another host country. However, this would have significant implications for the practicalities of everyday life such as tenancy agreements and schooling, and the need to embrace more shorter-term







instead of longer-term mission plans. There are no easy answers. The current configuration of the Europe Country Team – with team members scattered all over Europe – is an attempt at allowing greater agility and responsiveness. Add to this the idea of having ‘mobile’ teams and you begin to appreciate the complexities. Going forward, the tension will remain as to whether we expand and have more such ‘dispersed’ teams or continue to consolidate and build established ‘community’ teams. Perhaps, it will call for a delicate balance of both.

These important issues raise some fundamental questions which we need to prayerfully and humbly grapple with, as we seek the Lord to lead us in this journey of growing responsiveness. With many possibilities and opportunities ahead of us, we most need a heightened sense of discernment to help us be more in tune with the leading of the Holy Spirit. Like the church in Antioch, we would love it that while we are worshipping the Lord, praying and fasting, the Holy Spirit will call

out individuals to a new work, as he did for Barnabas and Saul in Acts 13:1-3. As Paul responded without hesitation to God’s direction and call to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10), may we also step out with greater responsiveness to share His love and truth with those who are most in need of Him. ♦

In 2021, Interserve Great Britain & Ireland prayerfully adopted **3 STRATEGIC INTENTS** for the coming years:

- **Growing Diversity**
- **Growing Responsiveness**
- **Growing Community**

Read more about our strategy to respond to a changing world via [interserve.org.uk/responding-to-a-changing-world](https://interserve.org.uk/responding-to-a-changing-world)



## Partnering across cultures

**SELENA RECENTLY VISITED THE UK FROM INTERSERVE’S SOUTH KOREAN OFFICE, AS THEY SEEK WAYS TO RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE CHANGES IN THEIR NATION AND THE SURROUNDING REGION.**

I recently had the chance to spend two months staying at the Interserve community hub in Birmingham. I had heard that the location is surrounded by communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and North Africa. Only after arriving there I realised how true this is: the people, culture, and local stores... I didn’t meet any East Asians like myself, or many Western people, as we would call them. I realised that I was living in a multicultural environment for the first time in my life.

Although I have travelled to Europe before, being in Birmingham was my first chance to meet people from these

different places. I got involved in some of the local groups for women run by Interserve Partners, and visited stay and play sessions in local churches. I loved seeing how God is leading Christians in this community to welcome people and make friends, to listen, offer help and share life together. And for those who are interested to know about Jesus, they offer different opportunities to find out more. It's a process that takes time. One of the main objectives I had in coming to Birmingham was to visit different Partners and understand more about these kinds of ministries for immigrants in the UK and across Europe. It was very helpful for me.

◆ I loved seeing how God is leading Christians in this community to welcome people and make friends.

Back home in our capital city, Seoul, I don't come across people from other cultural backgrounds. The only people I meet in my everyday life are Koreans. There are some immigrants from other Southeast Asian countries, but they stay in very specific areas to work in production and manufacturing industries, on the outskirts of the city. They remain separate from the general population, and sometimes they are not allowed to bring family members to Korea with them. There are some very specific ministries and churches that engage with these people, and some churches have projects working with other groups such as international students and refugees from neighbouring countries, who all have different needs. Many more South Korean churches are now beginning to explore how they can best welcome people from other cultural backgrounds.

Last year in 2023 we officially established the Korean country team,

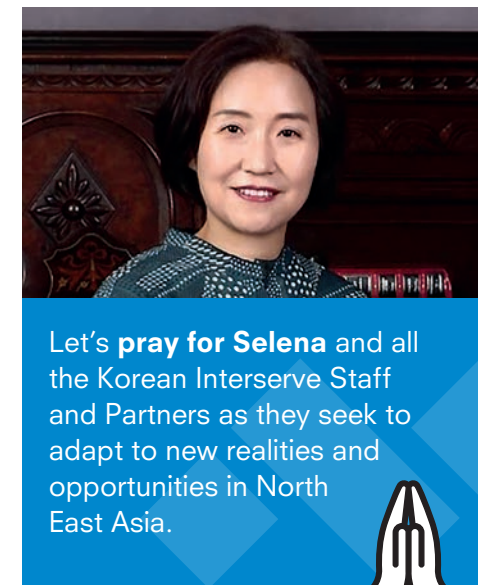
so that we can better respond to, and prepare for, changes in our society. The Korean population is decreasing, so immigration laws will soon be changing to allow more people to come from other countries to work here. At Interserve we see that we need to expand cross-cultural ministry in Korea, since many more people will be joining our society from other backgrounds. We need to be prepared. A number of Korean Interserve Partners who have returned from serving overseas are now reaching out to refugees and different language groups here in Korea. Many immigrants want to learn better Korean and need help accessing social support and healthcare – this is something that we can offer. We can also organise social programmes, visiting famous locations in Korea and spending time chatting and sharing life. And for some, we hope this will naturally emerge into the next level of discussion, talking more about the Bible and Jesus.

We are also responding to the wider needs of our region as we work with Christians in neighbouring countries, with a specific team called the North East Asia Reconciliation (NEAR) team. We have very difficult history with some neighbouring countries. For example, in Japan the Christian population is very very low. Although they were once enemies, we have love and compassion towards them, and we want to see things change. We do not yet have a country team there, but from South Korea we can support Partners in nearby areas, and are now even seeing applications for new Partners who want to serve overseas with us.

Next year, the fourth Lausanne Congress will be held in Seoul. The congress aims 'to catalyse the collaboration of the

◆ Although they were once enemies, we have love and compassion towards them, and we want to see things change.

global church towards the discipling of the nations and the shaping of the world for 2050'. There will be around 5,000 global participants there in person from every region of the world. While I was in Birmingham I was able to help some Interserve Partners reserve their accommodation. Living with Interserve Partners from around the world and finding new brothers and sisters in Christ was a real highlight of my time in England. It is exciting to discover our part in God's kingdom as we learn from one another and serve together. Now that I'm back home in Korea, I miss my new friends. But I don't miss the weather. ◆



Let's pray for Selena and all the Korean Interserve Staff and Partners as they seek to adapt to new realities and opportunities in North East Asia.





# Responding to God's growing Church

**SOMETIMES ALL WE CAN DO IS  
FOLLOW WHERE GOD IS LEADING,  
AND MARVEL AT HIS PLANNING.**

Over the last thirty years, God has been drawing more Muslim people to follow Jesus than any previous time in history. If mission is “seeing what God is doing and joining in”, how can we respond, and what part can we play as co-workers with God?

As many come to faith, there is an increasing need for culturally appropriate and accessible resources to support their discipleship. One such resource is the ‘Come Follow Me’ course, a relational tool that helps disciples make disciples amongst believers from Muslim backgrounds. First developed ten years ago by Interserve GBI Partner Tim with the vision to help Afghans disciple Afghans, the course was then published and promoted more widely in the UK. Since then, Interserve offices around the world have been involved in translating, publishing and promoting the course. Now translated into 25 languages with another eight on the way, ‘Come Follow Me’ is helping Christians and churches to make disciples across the globe.

Many British churches are embracing the privilege and challenge of welcoming

these new Jesus-followers into their midst. In response, several Interserve GBI Partners joined with other like-minded individuals and organisations to produce another course. ‘Joining the Family’ aims to equip churches to be ‘family’ to believers from Muslim backgrounds. This video-based discussion course (and accompanying book) is also gaining popularity worldwide. Interserve teams in the Netherlands, Brazil, and Singapore have got involved, contributing to the growth of intercultural churches around the world.

◆ **Over the last thirty years, God has been drawing more Muslim people to follow Jesus than any previous time in history.**

As this work has developed, so has its complexity. Translation, promotion and training for these resources is happening across an increasing number of language groups, contexts and countries where numbers of new believers are growing. Few

organisations are focused on this global discipleship space, so a team began to emerge in response to this growth, including several Interserve Partners. This team was eventually grafted into the ‘Word of Life’ charity in 2019, providing the necessary organisational and financial structures and trustees to move forwards.

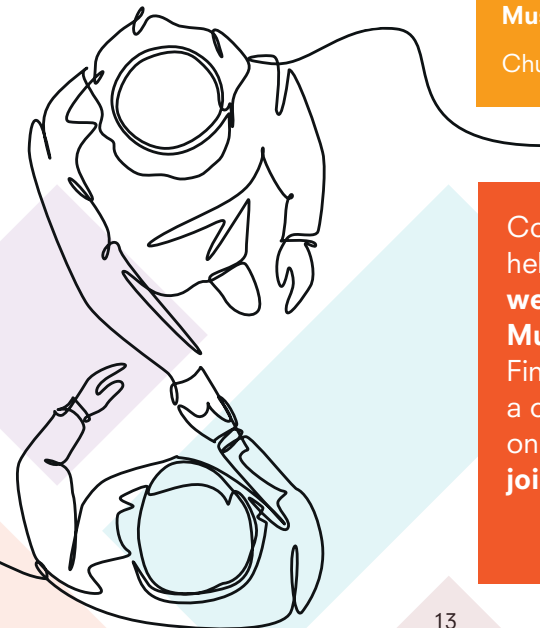
God continues to grow Word of Life in response to His growing Church amongst those from Muslim backgrounds. The charity now focuses on three strands: discipleship, church as family, and resources promoting learning from believers of Muslim backgrounds, along with training. They continue to follow the Lord’s direction. Just recently, Interserve GBI Partner David has moved into a leadership role in the charity, releasing Tim to focus on further writing and curriculum. New partner organisations, new translations, new resources, new networks, new relationships and new stories of how God is faithful. God is on the move, we are responding. ◆

“

**Joining the Family is a really great course that is useful for us at this time, as some asylum seekers from Iran have come to our church. Hearing their stories, as well as watching the videos and using the course material, is very powerful! Where they don't have enough English either to understand the question or give a full answer, I am using a translation app on my mobile. The course is a real blessing to all those taking part. We are learning from our Iranian brothers and from the videos, and they are able to tell their stories and pick up some of the video content. I am very thankful that this course exists, and we are learning so much together as a church, British born believers and believers from an Iranian Muslim background.**

Church Leader, Norfolk

**Could ‘Joining the Family’ help equip your church to welcome believers from Muslim backgrounds? Find out more about joining a course online or running one in your local area: [joiningthefamily.org](https://www.joiningthefamily.org)**



# A step of faith

**JAMES, A DEPUTY HEADTEACHER FROM THE EAST OF ENGLAND, SHARES HOW HE RESPONDED TO GOD'S CALL TO SPEND HIS SUMMER HOLIDAYS SERVING REFUGEES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.**

I have been reading GO magazine for many years, as I support some friends who work with Interserve. As I settled down to read a new edition of GO last year, little did I know this was about to set in motion an adventure of my own with God!

Amongst the updates and articles that I read was an invitation to those working in education to consider a short-term mission opportunity as part of Interserve's On Track programme. I felt a quickening in my heart and a prompt that I can only describe as the Holy Spirit, saying to me 'What about you?'. I have been working in primary education for twenty years, ten as a deputy headteacher. Would it be too much of a sacrifice to give up some of my school holiday to serve God, and use my skills, knowledge and experience to serve another community elsewhere in the world?

After prayerful consideration I decided to take a step of faith. Often in my life when faced with a possible new direction, I'm a firm believer that doors that are meant to open will open, and the ones that aren't will slam shut. So I tentatively contacted the Interserve office and left the rest to God. God well and truly swung wide the door! The On Track team carefully sought to match my skills and availability with the needs of established Interserve Partners, and provided some great preparation.

◆ I felt a quickening in my heart and a prompt that I can only describe as the Holy Spirit, saying to me 'What about you?'

Seven months later, just five days into my summer holidays, I found myself on a plane, on my way to spend three weeks in Southeast Asia. I was to be working alongside staff in a school for refugee children from across Asia, in a city where many families live while waiting (often for several years) for their asylum claims to be processed. Children from these migrant communities are not eligible for mainstream education, so a Christian NGO, a partner organisation of Interserve, has responded by providing education for over 1,200 students in 19 different centres across the country.

The main aim for my time in Southeast Asia was to support the development of teaching within the school that I was visiting. Through coaching and mentoring I worked with a local teacher on key areas of practice that we had identified

together. The context of this work challenged my own teaching practice. Compared to the British school where I normally teach, classes here were much larger (up to 50 children), and included a greater diversity of cultures. Nonetheless, God helped me to apply my knowledge and experience to support the teachers in this challenging context.

It was truly inspirational to experience first-hand the heart of this organisation for the diaspora community there. Their love and compassion for these displaced people shone through. Hearing students' personal stories opened my eyes to the ongoing difficulties faced by refugee families in ways that I had not understood before. Suddenly, faceless refugees who I had only heard about in the media became real people with real plights and problems.

Since returning to the UK, my understanding of refugees here has changed too. I am now hoping to get involved with similar ministries here. I am also hoping to continue working with the inspirational team in Southeast Asia. I plan to return again this year, and in the meantime am keen to support their work remotely from the UK. I went to give, but received so much as well. If you are thinking of volunteering, I would encourage you to step out in faith. ◆

Are you interested in exploring short term opportunities to serve with us? Contact [start@interserve.org.uk](mailto:start@interserve.org.uk)







# ADVENTUROUS

your journey starts  
here...

Are you aged **18-35**?

Are you looking for  
**something different?**

Are you up for a  
**new adventure**  
with God?

You are invited to step into  
the Interserve community and  
serve with us to see lives and  
communities transformed  
through encounter with Jesus  
Christ.

Could you spend a few months  
or even a whole year exploring  
what life in ministry could look  
like for you?

Visit **[interserve.org.uk/adventurous](https://interserve.org.uk/adventurous)**  
to start your journey of discovery  
and adventure with us...

