



Missionary Vision in Middle Egypt

By Lisa Atallah



Top to bottom: Cairo on the Nile River; street in Minya; Prayer meetings led to the Minya project.

Riding three and a half hours by train south from Cairo upstream along the Nile River and its canals, the train pulls into a major city station in central Egypt—Minya. It is capital of a large province with the same name. Minya's capital city, five major towns, and hundreds of villages are home to about 5.5 million Egyptians. About 50 percent are of Coptic Orthodox Christian heritage. Agriculture and its related industries dominate the economy, such as cotton, sugarcane, grain, fruit, vegetables, and livestock. A large state university is located in Minya city.

Missionary Beginning

Evangelical witness in Minya began in the mid-nineteenth century along with the first distribution of the Arabic Bible. It bore much fruit among nominal Coptic Christians. A

few Muslims were converted. Due to threats to their lives, they had to relocate to other parts of the country. (Even today this is often the case for Muslim converts.) Currently there are about 160,000 Evangelical/Reformed Christians in the province, organized in about seventy congregations. They range in size from several hundred to a small handful of members. Some churches have declined significantly. At least eighteen small churches have not had pastors or trained elders for

many years. A few have closed completely. This situation, along with many villages without churches, has weighed heavily on the hearts and minds of a number of Minyawawi Christian leaders.

Prayer Power

A small group of pastors, evangelists, elders, and other lay leaders began to pray together weekly for a spiritual revival in their province. As they prayed, they were burdened to call on churches in the province to seek a renewed vision for Gospel proclamation. The

vision caught on and several other prayer groups were started. Then a committee was formed under the leadership of Pastor Mahrous Habib, a former member of MERF's Board of Directors. As political and economic turmoil engulfed Egypt and the Arab world, concern that these events were distracting God's people from Kingdom priorities brought a new sense of urgency. An action plan was drawn up to focus on training and organizing young people of both city and village churches for outreach.

A total of fourteen specific communities spread over four geographical areas of the province were targeted





ern Kenya. Please pray for MERF staff and local Christians who seek to honor Christ in response to the urgent needs.

Clockwise: The Minya vision includes children's activities; tower of mosque rises over Egypt.

for this missionary endeavor. Even though they have significant numbers of nominal Christians, these communities have not had any organized gospel work for many years. The goal is to plant a church in each community in four to six years and move on to repeat the endeavor in other communities.

Called Out

Two experienced pastors sensed a calling and asked to be released from their charges to focus on the effort. With the help of Pastor Mahrous' committee, they screened and selected eight laymen. These have already joined the two pastors in beginning outreach. The eight laymen continue to also receive training in evangelism and discipling of those who respond to the Gospel message. Home Bible study

groups have already begun in all fourteen locations. Sunday evening worship services have begun in two of them. Most are attended by youth and young families.

To draw other Christians into the vision, the committee began to rotate the meeting place of their weekly prayer meeting between various churches located near the fourteen strategic communities. Forty-one Minyawis congregations committed to pray for and become involved in the outreach. Volunteers from these churches are to be trained to join the pastors and lay workers in house calling and one-to-one evangelism.

Missionary Partners

MERF gladly agreed to partner in supporting the Minya outreach project. The Fellowship has committed to financial support of the work as well as training events, Arabic Bibles, Sunday School curriculum, and other literature. MERF's local committee in Egypt is organizing a conference for spiritual leaders from churches in other Egyptian provinces to consider adopting similar projects. This also links

in with MERF's training of Egyptian Christian volunteers to disciple Muslim-background seekers who make contact through MERF's Arabic gospel broadcasts and internet ministries.

Praise God for the multiplication of His witness in Minya; pray for this vital Gospel work, that new congregations take root, and that churches in other Egyptian provinces catch the same vision.

URGENT PRAYER

The intensifying drought in the Horn of Africa is impacting the lives of millions in Somalia, eastern Ethiopia, and north-



*"Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it."
—Isaiah 19:21*

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