

A letter from our readers,

Continuing from the theme of our last issue: **Reaching Out to Ethnic Groups**

—by Lisa Zook and Kara White

While at Missions Conference '07, we heard about the opportunities that abound for coming in contact with foreigners near us and the potential for reaching them with the Gospel. It sparked some interest in my family and some friends of ours, and we began talking about and considering the opportunities around us. We paged through the phone book and looked for international stores and restaurants. With very little research we soon realized that there is a considerable foreign-born population near us, largely due to the nearby university.

Not long afterward, a friend and I began going into the city specifically to make contact with these foreigners. At first it was with mixed emotions of nervousness and excitement. But we were thrilled and amazed at the ease with which we were able to connect with them. Their relationship-oriented backgrounds make it relatively easy to build friendships.

I had some ingredients I needed to get at an Asian store so we planned to stop at East West Oriental Foods. Having known how different the Asian people are from my own culture has made me a little intimidated and unsure about how to reach out to them. After perusing the aisles and gawking at the amazing array of totally foreign packages I was in a state of pure delight; it was as if I'd just stepped into Korea. We gathered our items and found an excuse to ask a question or two of the owners before going to the checkout. There I continued to converse with the middle aged lady from Korea. She shared how difficult it has been to adjust--particularly to the language. As we part-

ed ways she bowed slightly forward in the traditional parting nod. Leaving the store I marveled as I recognized the heart change God had wrought in my heart towards this people group. I had such a love and desire to reach them for Jesus! Taking time to interact with them took away my fears and replaced it with God's compassion.

Throughout the rest of the morning I continued to be awe-struck with the ease in which one can make life and blood contacts with people from other countries with so little effort! Their warmth and openness certainly eased our fears and increased our courage. Over the next few visits to Iowa City we walked through open doors and met people from Malaysia, Egypt, Korea, Mexico, India, Mali, Nepal.

One day while visiting a Muslim grocery store we met a young woman from Egypt, who is here with her husband (a professor at the university) for a few months. We approached her with a friendly greeting and within a few minutes were engaged in a lively conversation. Between French and English we were able to communicate fairly well as we "toured" the store with her, learning about the foods sold there, interspersed with snatches of her life and ours. A few weeks later we invited the couple to our home for supper. We all thoroughly enjoyed the evening, visiting over the meal and touring our place. The young woman really enjoyed interaction with the children and the small gift we gave them in parting was much appreciated. They were delighted that we cared to have them to our house and we parted with many warm wishes. In our subsequent correspondence

by email, they have expressed how glad they are to know us and count us as their friends.

I've been amazed at the number of internationals I can see if I will just look for them! They, in turn, are thrilled if we take an interest in them, and their culture. Opportunities have already naturally presented themselves to share about our Lord. How we sense our deep need of wisdom as we walk among needy, hungering souls from very different backgrounds. God has opened a door of opportunity to minister to these souls that are lost, and share the love of Jesus with them. Truly the fields are white unto harvest but the laborers are few.