



Emerging Communities

The team in the Silk Road Area is seeing God break through in exciting and surprising ways. Take a journey on the Silk Road to meet the team and read their amazing stories.

Anna, a K believer, met Lily through a mutual friend last year and invited her to join the newly formed 'Sunday tea' club - a gathering of K believers and seekers. Lily's son Sam, who's in his mid-20s, has brittle bone disease and life has been a struggle for many years.

So when Anna gave them a copy of the Bible in the K language, they spent time reading and engaging with the story. When Anna followed up with the pair a couple of months later she asked, "Have you read the book? Have you accepted Jesus?"





Eliza and David have served among the K people since 2015. Here you can read Eliza sharing about the way God's Spirit is at work in the lives of K people and using the team's presence.

The answer came, "Yes!" And Lily began attending Anna's 'Sunday tea' club. Sometimes Anna and another friend go to visit Lily and Sam at their house.

"I'm very happy," Anna says. "It had been eight months since our group started and some people came but didn't really believe. Their hearts weren't true. But women like Lily, they are real."

About a month later, Anna sent through photos on WhatsApp of what looked like a day trip to a nearby tourist attraction. A believer from the city had found a minibus, gathered a number of believers from across the country, plus Anna, Lily and Sam, and taken the group for a day trip to a magnificent canyon. It had long been Sam's dream to visit the canyon before his body could no longer manage such an outing.

Here was the body of Christ coming together to admire God's creation and bless a mother and her son through fellowship and the fulfilment of a dream. What a privilege to sit on the sidelines and watch the Holy Spirit at work!

This is how we are seeing God at work. After supporting Anna through several domestic violence incidents, very ill health, pregnancy and poverty last year, she found the courage and strength to start her own faith community.

We connected her with a believer in the city, who broadened the network to other generous and loving believers. We've since been able to deliver copies of the Bible in the K language for Anna

to distribute, together with donations of groceries, clothes and toys.

Anna has six children of her own but she is sharing these gifts with the believing families in her network.

Believers from the city have heard Anna's story and visited her here in the village, to encourage her and spend time worshipping God with her family in their house. Now Anna has heard about other family groups in outlying villages through this network.

Another highlight has been connecting our teammate Petra, an experienced Occupational Therapist, with Lily and Sam. Petra is looking for ways to share her skills and experience with this family, to make life just a little bit easier in a world where caring for those with disabilities is not done well.

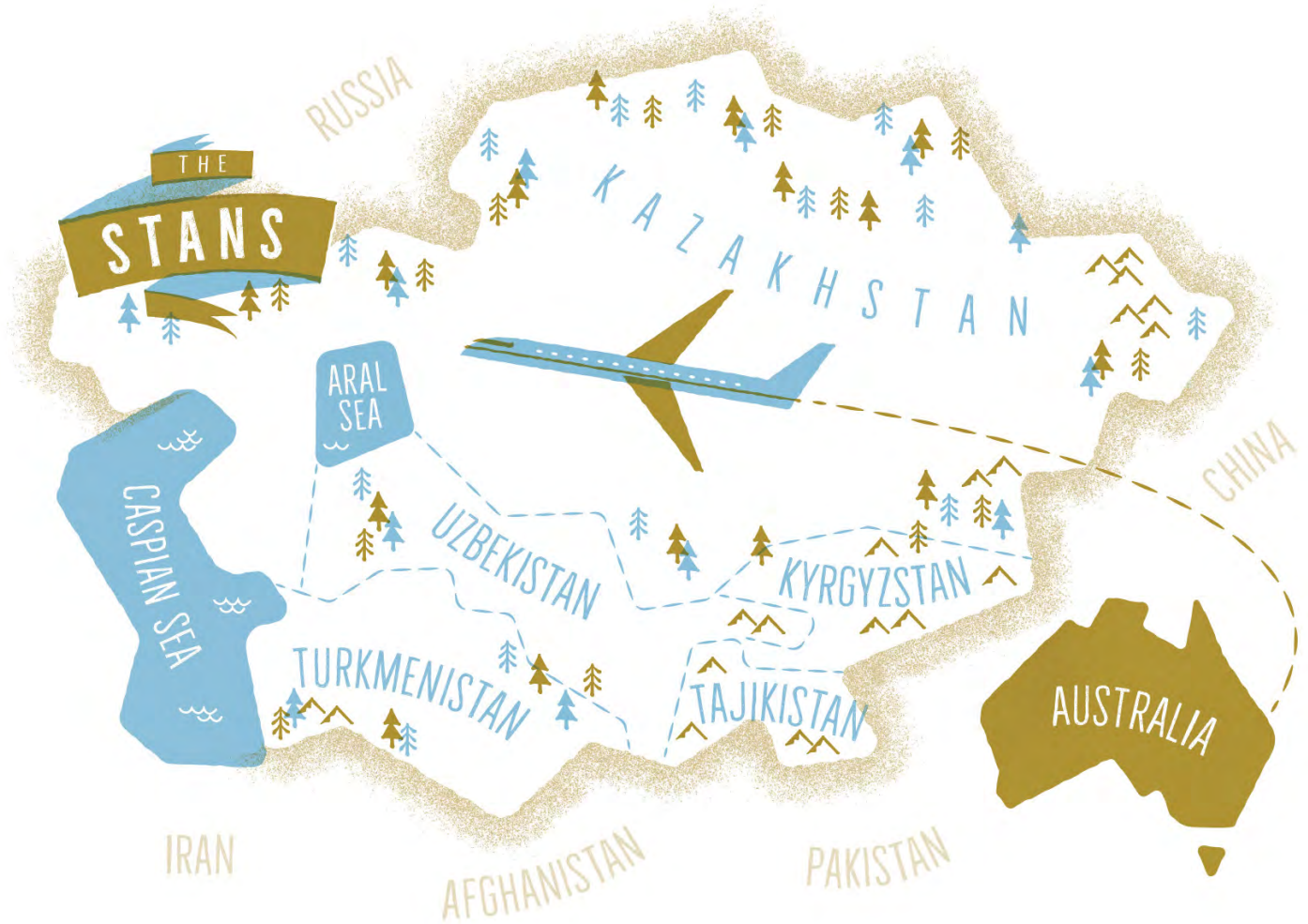
Our faithful partners and supporting churches have joined with our family and team many times over the past 12 months to kneel in prayer for Anna and her family.

Together we prayed when her husband abused her, when she was desperately ill, when she started her 'Sunday tea' club, and together we praised God for the safe arrival of her sixth baby in January.

What a joy to be in this together, as we follow the Spirit's leading to support the establishment of new K faith communities in this village and, hopefully, beyond.



Right: Anna is a K believer who is now discipling others in the Silk Road Area. She is pictured here with her children, along with Dustin, who is Eliza and David's son.



Mel is preparing to join the Global Interaction team in the Silk Road Area. Hear more of her story and partner with her: www.globalinteraction.org.au/Mel

How God is taking me from being a police officer to sharing Jesus on the Silk Road.

I was an unwitting and oblivious passenger at the beginning of my journey towards long-term intercultural work.

I started following Jesus in late high school, but by then I had decided what my life would look like. I knew what career I would have, where I would live and what my family would look like.

After a few years of following Jesus and a couple of years into what I had chosen as my lifelong career, I started to wrestle with the verse in Luke 9:23, of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. What it means to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Him.

As I was wrestling with these questions, I went on a short-term trip with my

local church. God used this trip to open my eyes to His world, and I returned with a nudging from God to look deeper into His heart and story of mission.

I spent time searching the Bible and chatting with pastors, mentors and mission organisations.

What I discovered was that 40% of the world's population can go from birth to death without hearing the Gospel in a way that makes sense to them.

The reality that billions of people don't know someone who can tell them about the life transforming love of Jesus, broke my heart. And if I didn't go, there were people who would never hear the good news of Jesus.

What started as a fun two-week overseas trip with friends, turned out to be the catalyst for the greatest adventure I could never have dreamed up myself!

It's not so different

We know context matters, but is mission really so different if we are *here* or *there*?



Ben and Petra are passionate about journeying with K people as they explore who Jesus is and what that means in their context. They have served in the Silk Road Area since 2016.

Growing up in churches in Australia, I had a very distinct understanding of what intercultural workers did. They went to far off lands, loudly and proudly proclaiming the kingship of Jesus, while also introducing people to principles of justice and mercy. Pioneers like Hudson Taylor and Amy Carmichael were the basis for this.

While I could rejoice in all they achieved for God, it also felt a little bit unattainable to be a part of that kind of work. The reality though, is that we are *all* able to be involved in God's mission. In fact I would say that we are all called to be a part of it, whether it's in Mozambique, the Silk Road Area or Australia.

Here are three foundational principles we've learnt that are applicable in whichever context you're in too.

1. It's God's Mission

As Christopher Wright puts it, "Mission is not ours; mission is God's." With this in mind, we remember that God is already at work in the places we find ourselves. One of the joys that our team has experienced recently has been a group of local K believers contacting us.

Our teammates David and Eliza have been invited to journey with this group in different ways. It is so encouraging for us all to know that there are local people here who are pursuing Jesus and seeking to get to know Him more. The Spirit has clearly been at work in this place.

There are also more subtle indications of God being at work in our community too. These are sometimes little comments that our friends make that indicate they are searching for God.

The challenge for us is to recognise where God is at work, and then to proactively partner with Him. To ask the hard questions that need asking. Where can you see God at work in your community?

2. It has to be Wholistic

We recognise that proclaiming the good news of the risen Jesus occurs in more than words. It includes our actions too.

As an Occupational Therapist, Petra has been able to use her skills to work with people who live with disability in our local community. These are people who are often rejected or ignored by their community. **By coming alongside them, showing them they have value, Petra is able to demonstrate the love of God.**

We see this in Australia as well when followers of Jesus provide breakfast to students who come to school hungry, teach English to Asylum Seekers or demonstrate the value they place on a person by committing to a weekly surfing catch up. Mission is more than just words. It's living out what it means to be a citizen of a different Kingdom.

3. It Takes Time

In an age where we like instant gratification, one of the most important principles for us to remember is that evangelism takes time.

Mrs K has been a friend of our team for many, many years. She can tell us all of the idiosyncrasies of the different Australians who have lived in our town, all of whom sought to introduce her to Jesus.

After about 10 years of this faithful witness she started to take steps towards Him.



Introducing Suzanne!
Suzanne is a candidate
and the newest member
of the Silk Road Area
team. Connect with her:
www.globalinteraction.org.au/Suzanne

In doing so, she recalled watching a former Global Interaction Team Leader wash the dishes and remembered being amazed by this counter-cultural demonstration of humility. She recalled watching the different ways in which Australian families related to each other. The steps she is taking towards Jesus now are built on the long-term investment of many different people.

The challenge to us all is to be planted, invested and alert to where God is at work. We do all these things to point people towards Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life.

