

# New Roots Review

September 2025

**Who are Behind the Numbers?** by Fred Wilgenburg



**NEW ROOTS  
MINISTRY**

Do you ever get caught-up-in-the-numbers-game? Data and statistics, and offering objective facts rather than subjective opinions, are important. As it is for business, scientific research, and politics, so at least in part, it is necessary for the work of the Church. With a global missions view, we should know about the “10/40 window,” and its statistics: <https://joshuaproject.net/unreached/7>.

As well, as people of God, it is important to be aware of the growing number of “religious nones (nothing)” as described by Pew Research: statistics of the US—> <https://bit.ly/3Jqpgij> AND statistics by country—><https://bit.ly/47EXIzM>

If you haven’t yet, but are considering opening those webpages, I caution you that they can be overwhelming, even depressing. Personally, if I don’t overbalance my interest in numbers, with budding relationships, I can get disheartened, numb, and lethargic as a Jesus-follower. Here are examples of relationships that our liaison, Ranee, and I have been developing over the last several months. In each, all involved are mutually blessed, and the Gospel is part of the relationship. An Afghan family of five came to Sioux Falls 18 months ago. They reached out to us as the refugee-receiving agency told them we offer free driver training. That became the start of an enjoyable relationship. One of our volunteers taught them to drive and get their licenses. As Ranee has become good at helping immigrants improve their English, I introduced her to the wife, Fatma (*names in this story and those below are changed for privacy reasons*). Ranee’s reading curriculum is from the Gospels, but she makes it clear that she could find something else in respecting that they are Muslim. Fatma was happy to use Ranee’s curriculum. As the husband, Abdul, wanted to improve his English, I began meeting with him each week for conversation and reading. I use “Understanding the Story” (*reading Bible passages and then answering questions*) as my reading curriculum, but I told him we could use something else. He wants to use my curriculum. This has opened us up to great talks, and prayers. **Did I mention that the blessings are mutual?** The family loves us, and we enjoy eating very good Afghan food, and drinking tea. We love them, too.

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*It is great having a full Board of Directors again. This is a well-rounded, committed bunch, including from left: William Daldoum, Becky Hoelscher, Al Punt, John DeJong, Mike Savers, Simplice Noutsougan, and Desire’ Jansen.*

One of our ministry’s best friends over the past eight years is Saida, who is originally from Sudan. Besides always welcoming groups whom I have hosted, in her store, and even in her home, she likes serving coffee and food to those who come, and sharing about her culture. In addition, having become good friends with Ranee, volunteer Sara, and others, Saida has referred numerous African people to our liaison ministry. **The relationship is mutual.** We have been able to help Saida’s daughter get her driver license, and with entrance exams, and we have been able to help around the store numerous times. This trust has allowed Saida, whose family is Muslim, to attend Sara’s church one time, and to receive an Arabic Bible from us and in which she read John 1 in her first language, which has surprised her as it has a very different description of “Issa”/Jesus than she had learned, and which her Christian Sudanese friends have been confirming to her.

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Don't read this thinking I always get this—quantitative vs. qualitative—right in ministry. I don't. I think even Jesus struggled with finding balance. Large crowds were naturally attracted to his miracles and his teachings (*before the Sermon on the Mount—Matthew 4:25; feeding thousands at a time*). But, He also needed time just with His inner circle (*just Peter, James and John—Luke 9:28; training for the 72—Luke 10:1; refreshment, preparation, & prayers with the 12 disciples—John 14-16*). And, He needed time alone with His Father—*John 17*.

Pastors and church leaders, let's provide discipleship and evangelistic opportunities for our people, in helping them experience fulfilling relationships that incorporate the Gospel. This helps to better utilize the spiritual giftedness of the overall church body. For examples and ideas, including domestic, international, and online, let me know and I would be happy to share. And, if any of you would like to step into the opportunities of New Roots Ministry shared above, please let me know.

Ultimately, the trajectories of the statistics reflected in the first paragraph's webpages will improve as we do more of what can become natural—being in trusting relationships with those “outside”—and which authentically include talking the Gospel because, naturally, we want that for our “loved ones.” For information on writing brief personal testimonies, or tools to effectively share the Gospel, which we train in Everyday-Ambassador Practicum (*read about it by scrolling down here: <http://sfnewroots.com/our-ministries/>*), just communicate your interest.

likes to engage in spiritual conversation, which over time has moved from an impersonal Muslim perspective, to more personal interest in the Gospel. We now have a strong friendship. A daughter also worked at Smithfield and we helped her through some challenges, all of which has built trust, and allowed us to finally meet Daoud. We had a nice visit over Bosnian coffee and snacks, prepared by his wife who also works at Smithfield. Daoud said to stop over any time. Recently, when I stopped, Daoud, who has poor health, was on the phone with an insurance company, distraught by not understanding well due to his limited English. Happy that I could help communicate, he did the sign-of-the-cross, in respect. I asked jokingly, “Daoud, are you Catholic?” He laughed, “I am Muslim.” In my presence, he then called Bill, an American Christian friend who once helped Daoud in a store with some language-challenges, so they swapped phone numbers. Bill and his wife are dear to Daoud's family. **The blessings are mutual, so the relationship lasts and is fulfilling.** And, God and His Gospel are at work as Bill and I speak at a spiritual level with the family, in part because they inquire.



*This youth group from Platte, SD keeps me excited for our beloved Church, and its future! They hung out with us on a Saturday and Sunday, and the tasks were not vacation-like, but more of a ministry plunge. Their interest in “getting their hands dirty” in Everyday-Ambassador Practicum, hanging out in various ethnic stores, eating interesting food, and worshipping African-style, was encouraging.*

### What is New Roots Ministry?

We are all about “**equipping immigrants & engaging the local church.**” This is done through workplace chaplaincy at Smithfield Foods & places where immigrants have a large presence, through Timothy Leadership Training, through hosting special educational events, through empowering immigrant pastors, leaders, and their churches, through offering unique Service Opportunities—serve in, or visit, stores owned by immigrants, then hear their stories, through our Liaison ministry (English language training, helping to adapt to a new culture & community, sharing our Good News), through driver training for immigrant adults, and through Everyday-Ambassadors Practicum.