

Witness Testimony – Peter Wamzee

I met Steve Buck 27th March 2011 when he spoke at Birchfield Gospel Hall, Aston, Birmingham

The theme of Steve's message was encouragement to Christians to love and befriend their Muslim neighbours. After the meeting I approached Steve and introduced myself to him and friends who travelled with him. I informed Steve that I was by ethnicity a Somali and an asylum seeker. I shared my story that I was brought up in East Africa as a Muslim but had converted to Christian faith as a young person. As a result, my community had rejected me.

I shared about the political situation in Somalia which has had no effective government since 1991. Large areas of Southern Somalia are controlled by al-shaabab, a terrorist group and a franchise of al Qaeda. This group has a mandate to wipe out all Christianity from the country. This made me very afraid and fearful of my personal future should I have to go back to East Africa. This was recently confirmed 1st July 2012 when al-shaabab launched a terrorist attack on two Churches in Garissa, Kenya, near to my home. Tragically, seventeen Christians were killed as they worshipped and seventy injured.

I asked Steve to meet with me and provide mentoring and support following our first contact. He met with me on a regular basis. He also introduced me to Restore, the Churches Together in Birmingham Asylum Seekers arm, and Asirt (Asylum Seekers Information Response Team). I have engaged well with Restore and become part of their "family" of asylum seekers.

Steve also involved me at the Hope Centre, Halesowen and the Halesowen Welcome Group. Both the Hope Centre and the Welcome Group provide a specialist service to asylum seekers such as me.

A challenging time was in December 2011, when I was informed that I had lost my NASS support. I was effectively homeless and destitute, and Steve allowed me to stay at his house. I have now been there the past twelve months. Through Steve and Further Outlook, I have met many people of Christian faith from a diverse group of Churches who have become my friends. They befriended me and prayed with me. I have also had health issues that have required assessment. Steve has had out of necessity to support me financially out of his own means as I have had no income and as an asylum seeker seeking status am unable to do paid employment.

A further involvement is at Black Country Food Bank and I have supported the Volunteers at the Replenish distribution centre in Stourbridge. I am also a Stourbridge Street Pastor and love doing patrols on average twice a month. I have also engaged with Zion Church, Halesowen and am currently doing an Alpha course there.

I am grateful for all the help and support received from Steve and Further Outlook. I am awaiting news from my Solicitor about a fresh claim being made to the Home Office and I am hopeful the outcome will be that I get leave to remain in the UK.

Peter Joseph Wamzee

28th November 2012