



## Tea Time



In the East African country of Tanzania, women—many of them widows or heads of abandoned households—are considered inferior and treated with little respect. On the other hand, they're responsible for providing for themselves and their children, which has caused many to turn to commercial sex as a means of survival.

Knowing that these women rarely see gestures of compassion, Africa Inland Church Tanzania (AICT) honored them through a tea party. Church members passed out 220 invitations throughout the small fishing community of Ikuza. To their surprise, 420 local women—most of them prostitutes—came dressed in their finest for the special occasion of tea cakes, doughnuts and prizes.

"The tea party was particularly meaningful to the ladies because it is generally the men who are the focus in their culture," explains missionary Chris Hamilton, who helped plant AICT in 2005.

The church also used the event as an opportunity to address AIDS/HIV prevention and low self-esteem issues, instilling both personal value and empowerment. Hamilton read to the women from Isaiah 43:1: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine."

Afterward, more than 20 women expressed to Hamilton and other volunteers that they wanted to get to know Jesus better. AICT continues to meet with them, helping them find alternative means of supporting their families.

"At the tea party, we told them they are valued, loved and accepted by God and His Church, and because of that, they were wide open to learning about HIV/AIDS and Christ," Hamilton says. "They are still raving about it!"

—H.J.

## INSIDE THE 10/40 WINDOW

**CHINA** The most populated country on earth, China is home to about 20% of the world's people. Of its 1.3 billion population, more than 90% live in the eastern half of the country, which includes major cities like Shanghai and Beijing. Though most of the population claims no religion, 8% say they are Buddhist and 8% atheist. Only 7%, some 92 million people, are Christian.

Despite being the religion of a small percentage of the population, Christianity is considered a threat to the government's communist ideology, making China No. 12 on Open Door's ([opendoorsusa.org](http://opendoorsusa.org)) list of countries with the most Christian persecution. According to Jubilee Campaign, an interdenominational lobby group, some 300 Christians are detained at any one time in China. Yet regardless of the danger, Christianity increases by about 7% annually, although specific numbers are hard to come by as many brave congregations, including house churches, operate independently of the government's restrictions.

Such growth is exciting, but requires the continuous training of Chinese Christian leaders. To help, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF; [thefellowship.info](http://thefellowship.info)), a U.S.-based organization of Baptist individuals and 1,800 churches, is supporting Chinese churches educationally by running regular lay training events, and financially by purchasing new building spaces for worship and supplementing pastors' salaries.

Says Bill Cayard, field personnel for CBF who has served in China for three years: "One of the things that most encourages the pastors is merely the knowledge that believers from around the world—people whom they will never meet, with faith as their only commonality—care about them and want to support them in their ministries."

—K.J.