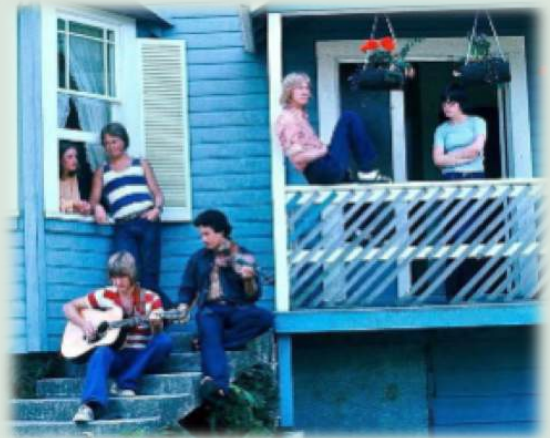


GWEN & GORD NICKEL - LIFE OF FAITH, MUSIC & CROSS CULTURAL MISSIONS

Written by Karen Loerke on behalf of Gwen and Gordon Nickel

Patience, selflessness, and trust in Christ define Gwen and Gordon Nickel. These qualities anchor their cross-cultural missions, where building bridges is central to their life's work.

Gwen and Gordon met at Bible School, united by a shared faith and love of music. In the 1970s, they joined a Christian band called the Sound of Light, using music to spread their Christian beliefs. Performing at coffeehouses, churches, university campuses, and summer camps, the band drew diverse audiences who enjoyed their enthusiasm and



harmony. Their musical legacy lives on today through Larry Nickel's arrangements (Gordon's brother), still performed by choirs through Cypress Choral Music.



A central theme in Gwen and Gordon's life is obedience to God's calling. In 1988, they decided to relocate from Canada to Karachi, Pakistan, as missionaries with their three children. This decision showed their willingness to leave familiar surroundings, trust in God, and share their faith in a country that is mainly Muslim.

Adapting to life in Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, and navigating its complex cultural divides were the biggest challenges for the Nickels. Their commitment to genuine relationships, built on local trust, was essential. By embracing hospitality and local customs, their actions often conveyed faith more than words.

Building trust is essential in forming friendships. Gordon befriended a Muslim teacher by discovering shared interests. By attending community events such as funerals, he was able to establish genuine connections and demonstrate empathy without needing to preach. It is possible to appreciate a country's culture without abandoning your faith. As a missionary, you represent Jesus Christ and must uphold that role.

Though introverted, Gwen and Gordon often stepped outside their comfort zones. Gordon recalled a time when, in a crowded market, he greeted a refugee in Urdu with "Peace be upon you," which started a conversation. Their small talk about family, weather, and origins revealed that people everywhere share much in common. We all go through birth, death, joy, sadness, hope, love, and loss.

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Gwen and Gordon's perseverance was tested during times of political uncertainty, especially during the 1991 Gulf War, when "Go Home Bush" appeared on their driveway. Despite the U.S. consulate's evacuation, Gwen and Gordon chose to stay, even as many locals viewed Canadians and Americans as interchangeable. This act of remaining in Pakistan amid conflict underscores Gwen and Gordon's trust in the Lord and His promises.

Amid these challenges and opportunities, Gordon followed his passion for Christian teaching. He taught Biblical Hebrew and Islamic Studies at a seminary attended by students from diverse Christian backgrounds. Throughout, Gwen and Gordon also honoured their Mennonite Brethren roots.



Gwen and Gordon's greatest strength is their unwavering commitment to their mission, persevering even when progress seemed invisible. Their enduring influence highlights how hope and service shape every relationship and act of kindness. Part of their mission in Pakistan involved learning about Islam, acquiring language skills, and adjusting to life in a predominantly Muslim country. Learning Urdu enabled Gwen and Gordon to share their faith locally, and this ability later supported them during future missions.

After their time in Pakistan, Gwen and Gordon returned to Canada in 1994 and spent four years in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. There, Gordon taught and reconnected with family on the prairies.

In 1998, new opportunities arose when Gordon began his PhD at the University of Calgary. Drawing on his education and missionary experience, he resumed overseas missions in 2000, moving to Hyderabad, India. From 2000 to 2003, they lived in this central technology hub and cultural centre, also known as the 'City of Pearls' for its history of gemstone trade.

The Nickels returned to Canada, and with a completed PhD, Gordon taught from 2003 to 2009 at Associated Canadian Theological Schools (ACTS Seminary), part of Trinity Western University. This period marked a renewed emphasis on scholarship and Christian mentorship.

While living in Vancouver from 2008 to 2011, Gwen and Gordon worked with family respite care for First Nations children. They created supportive groups that provided compassion and stability. Although rewarding, Gwen shared that the emotional demands of the work would be challenging to maintain over the long term.



In 2011, Gordon received a call from India about a Muslim book critical of the Bible, which posed challenges for Christians and missionaries working in Islamic countries. This new issue prompted Gordon to pursue another Christian scholarly mission. With knowledge of eight languages, Gordon had the experience and resources to take on this task and agreed to write a response. Gwen and Gordon found a quiet spot in the Shuswap, and Gordon spent three years researching and writing about Islamic studies from a Christian perspective.

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From 2011 to 2014, Eagle Bay served as a peaceful retreat while Gordon focused on *The Gentle Answer*—a scholarly response to Muslim critiques of both the Bible and the Qur'an. The book concludes with an invitation to foster dialogue and mutual respect between faiths.

While finishing his book in Eagle Bay, Gordon was asked to lead the Centre for Islamic Studies in Bengaluru, India. Over the next five years, from 2014 to 2019, Gwen and Gordon split their time between Canada and Asia to guide the Centre for Islamic Studies in Bengaluru. Later, COVID-19 restricted travel.

Eventually, the Nickels returned to Eagle Bay, where their dedication to faith and service endures. Gwen and Gordon are active members of Eagle Bay Community Church, where Gordon regularly preaches and mentors others. They are cherished and respected members of both the church and the local community.



Gwen and Gordon's story is shaped by faith, cross-cultural engagement, and relationship-building. These guiding principles offer a clear model for authentic ministry in today's divided world.

Their legacy is measured by consistent acts of kindness—showing that love is reflected in compassion and in building meaningful connections across cultures. Their example shows perseverance, reliance on divine guidance, adaptation to change, and living with less, all of which deepen faith in Christ. Responding to God's call requires a willingness to surrender your own will, to have faith, and to take prayerful action in obedience.

Gwen and Gordon's lasting faith, love of learning, and practical service show that even small acts can make a lasting difference—encouraging others to accept Christ with bravery and hope.

