



barnabasprayer

BARNABAS FUND - AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH
BRINGING HOPE TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

JANUARY/
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Thank you for your prayers for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, which make such a difference to them. We sometimes have to change or omit their names for security reasons, and we have only limited space to share their stories. But the Lord knows the people and places we are praying about. Please do not feel limited by the specific prayer requests, but pray as you feel led. On each Sunday we have provided a set prayer; please feel free to use these in their current form, to adapt them as you prefer, or to use the information they contain to frame your own prayers.

January

FRIDAY 1 At the start of a new year, let us pray to the LORD who knows the end from the beginning, whose purposes will stand, who brings about what He has planned, that He will have mercy on our troubled world, wracked by violence, hunger and disease. The UN's World Food Programme warned in November that 2021 would be worse than 2020. Pray especially for Christian minorities living with pressure and persecution that Jesus will fill them with His joy, peace and hope as they face the unknown year ahead. (Isaiah 46:10-11)

SATURDAY 2 "It's disasters on all levels!" wrote a Syrian Christian to Barnabas Fund. "The sanctions hit the economy in such a way that made it collapse! No fuel means no electricity, no bread, no cars to move and no transport of goods. These days even bread is being sold only with what is called the smart card! So it is limited, same as rice, sugar, vegetable oil and so

on." Medicines were hard to find and very expensive. Fires had ravaged the beautiful coastal forests, where many Christians displaced by the civil war are now living. Pray that the Lord will sustain and help the innocent people of Syria, especially our Christian brothers and sisters, and that US sanctions will soon be lifted, enabling Barnabas Fund and others to send aid.

SUNDAY 3 Lord Jesus Christ, we pray today for Christians in Iraq, whose quiet, faithful Christian lives have been wrecked, apparently forever, by the militants who surged across their country nearly seven years ago, killing, kidnapping and seizing their homes to occupy or sell. Dear Lord and Saviour, You know each of Your children and what terrible memories, bereavements and other losses they live with to this day. You know the uncertainty of the future for them. We pray that each will find comfort in their eternal relationship with You, knowing that this one thing can never be taken away from them.

MONDAY 4 The huge explosion five months ago in the port of Beirut was the last straw for many Lebanese Christians. "They see no hope for their children in Lebanon," wrote a senior church leader in Lebanon to Barnabas Fund, and any who can emigrate are doing so. Soon "there will be no congregation ... and only stones will remain to testify [that] there were Christians here once upon a time". Pray that, despite the multiple disasters which have befallen Lebanon, a Christian presence will continue in this country where Christians were the majority less than a century ago.

TUESDAY 5 During the Syrian civil war, which unleashed anti-Christian violence in a country where Christians had previously lived as respected equals with the Muslim majority, many Syrian Christians fled for safety to Lebanon. Most of them do not have residency permits and cannot find proper work to support their families. They feel themselves – like Syrian Muslims – to be unwanted and unloved in Lebanon, which is afflicted by enormous economic problems; this feeling has got even worse in the last 18 months as Lebanon’s problems have multiplied. Bring the needs of our brothers and sisters to the LORD of lords, the great God, who “loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing”. (Deuteronomy 10:17-18)

WEDNESDAY 6 Pray for Christians in Saudi Arabia whose situation has not improved for many years, despite the country becoming gradually freer in certain ways. It is still illegal for Christians and other non-Muslims to show their faith publicly in any way. Simply meeting together for worship in a private home could potentially lead to arrest. Pray that all will be encouraged and strengthened in their walk with the Lord, whether they are poor migrant workers from other countries or Saudi citizens who have put their lives on the line by a decision to leave Islam and follow Christ.

THURSDAY 7 Even Saudi Arabia condemned the Islamist attack in which three people were killed in a church in Nice, France by a knife-wielding Tunisian man shouting “Allahu Akbar” on 29 October. On the

same day a man with a gun, shouting “Allahu Akbar”, threatened passers-by in the French city of Avignon and there was a knife attack on the French consulate in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi foreign ministry said that “extremist acts” like that in Nice “contravene all religions” and stressed “the importance of avoiding all practices which generate hatred, violence and extremism”. Pray that Saudi Arabia, whose oil wealth has been used for decades to promote an extremely intolerant form of conservative Islam all over the world, may genuinely begin to work for moderation and tolerance.

FRIDAY 8 At least 54 ethnic Amhara people, mostly women, children and elderly, were shot dead by terrorists of the Oromo Liberation Army in Gawa Quanga village, Ethiopia, on 1 November. The victims had not been able to run fast enough to get to safety in a nearby forest. This was one of a spate of terrorist attacks that targeted Amharas (who are mostly Christians), or Christians of a variety of ethnic groups, over a period of months. Pray that the Lord will comfort those who mourn for their loved ones.



Ethiopian Christians praying

SATURDAY 9 A Christian couple in Somaliland were arrested on 21 September when police visited their home after a tip-off and found Christian materials there. The couple were accused of being “apostates [from Islam] and evangelists spreading Christianity”. Many threats were made against them, but then they were unexpectedly released on 1 November, enabling them to travel with their youngest child to a safe country and be reunited with their two elder children. Pray that the very small Christian community in strictly Islamic Somaliland will not become fearful, but will continue to trust in the LORD who watches over their coming and going, now and forever. (Psalm 121:7-8)

SUNDAY 10 **Our Father in heaven, we bring to You today our Christian brothers and sisters in Somalia, who are in daily danger of death because they have chosen to follow Jesus. Help them to bear the insults and abuse, the rejection and the loneliness, strengthened by knowing that You see and understand. Give them opportunities to feast upon Your Word and grow in faith and love. Keep them in Your perfect peace, their minds steadfast and unruffled, as they trust in You, and in the mighty resurrection power of Your Son Jesus Christ, in whose Name we ask. (Isaiah 26:3)**

MONDAY 11 A number of Christian and Sufi Muslim leaders from Sudan met for a two-day conference and then signed a declaration on 27 October aimed at promoting peace and freedom of religion. This followed a series of extraordinary developments in Sudan since moderate Muslims gained

political control in April 2019 after almost 30 years of extreme Islamic rule under strict sharia (Islamic law) during which the Christian minority suffered severe persecution. Thank the Lord for all the advances towards freedom, equality and human rights. Pray that the October declaration will be followed by real and practical developments to implement it.

TUESDAY 12 While the government of Chad was struggling to tackle Covid-19 last year, Islamist terrorist groups took the opportunity to mount many attacks against both military and civilian targets. Chadian Christians also face hostility from followers of African Traditional Religions, who live mainly in the south, which is where most of the Christians are. A particular problem is the long and brutal initiation ceremonies for boys approaching adulthood, which the followers of African Traditional Religions try to force Christians to undergo. Pray for Christians in Chad that their faith may not fail.

WEDNESDAY 13 An evangelical missionary from Switzerland was murdered in Mali by Islamic militants in September 2020. Beatrice Stöckli (59) had been kidnapped and held captive for over four years by a group called Jammāt Nasr al-Islām wal Muslīmēen (JNIM). Three other European hostages and a Malian politician were released by JNIM about a month later, reportedly in exchange for over 100 jihadists who had been captured by the Malian authorities. Beatrice had had an earlier experience of kidnapping in 2012 when she was held for nine days and tortured. On her release, the terrorists warned

her not to come back to Mali. Despite this, she decided that she would return to her ministry in Timbuktu. Pray that her many years of work in Mali will bear much fruit in this country where Christians are about 2% of the population.

THURSDAY 14 Iranian believer Ebrahim Firouzi has spent much of the last nine years in prison or internal exile. During this time, his health suffered greatly and his mother died of cancer. Ebrahim (now 33) has been repeatedly arrested and charged with various “crimes” related to making known the Christian faith or having contact with Christians outside Iran, thus extending his time in detention. On 27 September 2020 he was summoned yet again to face new charges, which could have led to six more years in prison, but this time the charges against him were speedily dismissed. Praise God for this. However, Ebrahim still has two more years of internal exile to serve from a previous conviction. He had hoped to use the time in exile for personal growth by online theological studies, but his laptop and mobile phone have been confiscated. Pray that they will be returned so he can immerse himself in learning about the Lord.

FRIDAY 15 Iranian converts from Islam to Christianity, Sam and Maryam, were convicted of various “crimes” related to possessing evangelistic literature and sentenced to various punishments. But worse was to come when another court hearing stated that their adopted daughter Lydia must be taken away from them. Lydia, a toddler with serious health problems, had been with Sam and Maryam since she was

three months old. Even though two Grand Ayatollahs issued *fatwas* in support of Sam and Maryam, the court decision could not be overturned and, by the time you are reading this, little Lydia has probably been in state care for nearly four months. Pray that the Lord will act in power and enable this family to be reunited.



Sam, Maryam and Lydia

SATURDAY 16 The Word of God promises: “You shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace.” (Isaiah 55:12 NRSV) Thank you for praying for “Shahrokh”, a theological student in Iran who began a one-year prison sentence in June 2020. “I am in need of your prayers but I go there with a deep joy,” Shahrokh had written to his tutor when explaining why he would not be able to do any assignments or exams for a while. Shahrokh fell sick in prison and as a result he was set free after about six weeks. Praise God that we have a heavenly Father whose thoughts and ways are higher than ours. (Isaiah 55:8-9)

SUNDAY 17 Heavenly Father, we lift to You the Christians of Kazakhstan, whose lives have become increasingly

difficult and dangerous over recent years, as new laws are passed by the secular government and the majority society becomes steadily Islamised. Although Christian books are censored and destroyed, and even discussing faith in a private home is technically illegal, we rejoice and praise You because nothing can restrict the work of Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, as He teaches Your people, builds up their faith, and reminds them of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whose Name we pray.

MONDAY 18 A pastor in Tajikistan contacted Barnabas Fund to ask for prayer. He had received a visit from the authorities to warn him that they had intelligence that radical Islamists had been inspired to take a more aggressive stance against churches and church leaders because of the strong statements made by President Macron of France about Islamist ideology. Thank the Lord that the Tajik authorities are acting to try to keep the Christian minority safe and pray that the Lord God of hosts will be a refuge and a strong tower for His people.

TUESDAY 19 At the time of writing the Turkmen government claims there is no Covid-19 in their country – but the population see that many have developed the symptoms and then died. “Those who have strong immunity survive. The rest are buried,” wrote a Turkmen pastor to Barnabas Fund. He asked prayer for “God’s wisdom and the fear of the Lord in the hearts of the people in power, so that they sincerely care about the people in this difficult time!” He also asked prayer for protection from the

coronavirus, especially because “there are so few of us Turkmens!” (The total population of the country is only six million.) The tiny Turkmen Christian community has had many members sick with Covid-19, he said, but none had died. Pray especially for the Christian community that the Lord will guard, protect and keep them through this danger.

WEDNESDAY 20 The Turkmen government also claims there is no poverty in their country, although people have to queue all night to buy a few items in the state-run shops, where prices are subsidised, while prices in private shops are sky-rocketing. All citizens are closely controlled and their spending monitored in this closed country. For Christians the pressures are even greater. It is illegal for them to meet except in one of the few registered church buildings, so many have to meet in homes, running the risk of being raided by the police and arrested. Pray that, though hard pressed on every side, they will not be crushed, though perplexed they will not despair, though persecuted they will never feel abandoned. (2 Corinthians 4:8-9)

THURSDAY 21 Please ask the Lord to guide the work of five Russian Christian lawyers, supported by Barnabas Fund, who help Russian churches protect their rights and freedoms, defend churches or their members against false accusations, and ensure churches have all the complex paperwork necessary for them to function legally. They also run training courses and seminars to teach pastors and other Christians how to avoid

accidentally violating current Russian legislation, which could result in hefty fines. Thank the Lord that, even during coronavirus times last year, the lawyers found ways to continue their vital work.

FRIDAY 22 Praise God for the way in which the work of the five Russian Christian lawyers (see above) is building faith, through God's favour and blessing (Ephesians 3:20). "I did not believe it," wrote a senior Christian leader when the Arbitration Court of Appeals in Omsk ruled in the favour of the Christians, "No, of course I prayed for the outcome of the case, but until the last I did not believe there would be a just decision." The lawyers commented, "The Lord protected His Church and showed us again that nothing is impossible for Him!"

SATURDAY 23 Eight churches were registered in Uzbekistan in the first nine months of 2020 and nine were registered in the whole of 2019. These figures may seem rather low, but for Uzbek Christians they are a wonderful answer to prayer, as for decades it had been virtually impossible for a church to gain registration, and thus operate legally without fear of arrest. Pray that more churches will be granted registration in 2021.

SUNDAY 24 **We pray, O Lord, for Christians in Kyrgyzstan, and we thank You for all those who have decided to follow Christ despite the rejection they can expect to face from their families and communities. May they be comforted as they remember that You, too, were despised and rejected. We ask that you will protect and encourage**

them, especially those in rural areas, where Christians are more vulnerable. Equip, guide and strengthen those who pastor and teach other believers, that all may grow daily more and more into the likeness of Your Son Jesus, in Whose Name we pray. (Isaiah 53:3)

MONDAY 25 After two years in force, Nepal's so-called "anti-conversion law" had only been used against Christians, said a Nepali church leader to Barnabas Fund. He reported that Christians retained their trust in the court system of their country, as none of the accused Christians had been convicted. Despite this law and a general hostility towards Christians, there are many individual Hindus in local or national government who have given funds for church buildings and Christmas celebrations. Praise God for them and the lawyers who recognise the innocence of the falsely accused Christians; pray that their attitude will spread widely throughout this Hindu-majority country.

TUESDAY 26 On 22 and 23 September extremists in India's Chhattisgarh state threatened Christians in three villages that they must "leave their faith or face fatal consequences". There was no doubt of their seriousness, as the extremists went on to raze about 16 homes to the ground. The Christians were left in "fear and shock" said the Evangelical Fellowship of India. Pray for our vulnerable and marginalised brothers and sisters that they will stand firm in the Lord.

WEDNESDAY 27 A Sri Lankan pastor has been forced to stop his ministry after being threatened by police and

Buddhist monks. On 18 October, police visited the pastor and ordered him to report immediately to the local police station. When he got there, the pastor was taken to an office crowded with monks, who had a church attendance list in their possession and issued a series of threats to the pastor. The church had already suffered five years of intimidation. Pray for an end to the harassment of Christians in Sri Lanka.

THURSDAY 28 Christians and other non-Muslim minorities in Bangladesh found that Islamist extremist attacks against them increased while the pandemic was raging in the middle of last year. Pray for their protection. Remember especially the Rohingya Christians living as a tiny minority in the midst of three-quarters of a million Rohingya Muslim refugees in Bangladesh; they are at all times very vulnerable to attack by extremists among the Rohingya Muslims. Ask the Lord to be their safe refuge.

FRIDAY 29 Daud (10) is one of 538 children of Christian brick-kiln families



Daud is very happy that Barnabas Fund enables him to go to school. He loves to study and wants to be a pastor

who attend a group of eight schools started especially for the brick-kiln communities in Pakistan and supported by Barnabas Fund. He says that, whenever he has the opportunity to go to church, he listens very carefully to the sermon, which he always finds inspirational. He wants to be a pastor when he grows up and that is what his mother is praying for too. Without the free schooling from Barnabas Fund he would not be able to study at all. Pray for the wellbeing of all the school-children, and their parents and teachers, that the schools will be springs of faith, truth, strength and hope for these beleaguered communities.

SATURDAY 30 Praise God that Sawan Masih's conviction for blasphemy was overturned by the Lahore High Court on 5 October. The Pakistani Christian man had spent eight years in prison and had been on death row since March 2014. That leaves seven Pakistani Christians currently sentenced to death for allegedly defiling the name of Muhammad. Pray that they too will be acquitted. Ask the Lord to protect Sawan, seeking to start a new life far away, as there are many zealous Muslims in Pakistan who believe that Allah will be pleased if they kill anyone who has ever been accused of this kind of "blasphemy".

SUNDAY 31 Heavenly Father, we lift to You the Christian women and girls of Pakistan, so vulnerable and in need of Your protection. Watch over each one as she goes about her daily life and keep her safe from any who would seek to kidnap her by force or trickery. Be especially close to the many Christian widows, struggling to provide for their

children, and protect them in a context where they are triply despised - for being Christian, for being female and for being widowed. May they always feel Your loving presence with them. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ.

February

MONDAY 1 The Armenian people embraced Christianity in 301 AD and it has been vital part of their identity ever since. They have suffered much in history, particularly in the Armenian Genocide of a century ago, and last September endured violence again, when Azerbaijan attacked Nagorno-Karabakh, an enclave



Armenian women and children sheltered from fierce bombardment in basements in Nagorno-Karabakh

in Azerbaijan with an Armenian population. Armenians felt they were again forgotten and betrayed by the international community in their hour of need and, when a ceasefire was agreed on 10 November, the Azeris kept all the territory they had seized. Thank the Lord for the Armenians' faithfulness to Christ, undaunted despite centuries of persecution. Pray that they will know God's grace and peace at this time and that His purposes for them will be fulfilled.

TUESDAY 2 More than half the population of Nagorno-Karabakh fled to Armenia as Azeri forces advanced across their territory during six weeks of fighting last year (see above). Armenia, a desperately poor country, was struggling to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. Many people opened their homes to give shelter to acquaintances or strangers from Nagorno-Karabakh, and Barnabas sent funds to help with food and winter clothes for the children of the new arrivals. The hospitals of Armenia quickly filled with wounded from the war zone, forcing Covid-19 patients to be cared for at home. Pray for the Lord's hope and consolation for these defeated people, and that He will provide for their practical needs.

WEDNESDAY 3 Six people were killed and three seriously injured when Fulani extremist militants, armed with guns and dressed in police uniforms, attacked the Christian village of Wereng, Plateau State, Nigeria, on 5 October. Eyewitnesses said the attackers specifically identified, pursued and killed the acting village head, Chungyang Mwadkon. Wereng

village has been attacked repeatedly and at least 30 of its inhabitants murdered. Pray that the Nigerian authorities will exert themselves to stop this anti-Christian violence.

THURSDAY 4 Northern Mozambique has been afflicted by Islamist violence for the past three years. Christians, moderate Muslims and anyone else who rejects the jihadists' ideology is a target. Thousands of desperate people are on the move, seeking safety. Some have fled to the bush, others to Christian mission stations, others to small offshore islands, and still others have taken boats to Pemba, the provincial capital, 100 km away. Typically, the attackers behead their victims and cut their bodies into pieces. Please pray that the men of violence will become sickened by their own savagery and turn to the Prince of Peace.

FRIDAY 5 "When they captured us, they set aside the Christians and non-Muslims," wrote Mani, a Christian from northern Mozambique, one of many whom Barnabas Fund has assisted with food aid after Islamist terrorist violence. Mani had grown up in a Muslim-majority area and therefore could answer correctly the questions on Islam that the terrorists posed to their captives. But other Christians could not. "We had to watch the non-Muslims and Christians be decapitated. From there they took us to the mosque to test our knowledge of Islam." A few days later, one terrorist advised Mani to flee and even took him to a wooded area so he could make his getaway. Mani eventually got back to his village but found everything burnt down. Please pray for him. At the time

of writing, he has been reunited with his daughter but has not seen his wife since the day of the attack.

SATURDAY 6 Despite rising persecution in many countries, North Korea is probably still the hardest place in the world to be a Christian. Please pray for our faithful brothers and sisters, who live daily with the danger of being sent to terrible labour camps, where they could die from the harshness of the conditions and the extra maltreatment they often suffer because they are Christians. Another danger is public execution. Pray that God will give them grace, moment by moment, to fix their eyes on Jesus and on what is unseen and eternal. (Hebrews 12:2; 2 Corinthians 4:8)

SUNDAY 7 Heavenly Father, we praise You for the wonderful growth of Your Church in China, and for the courage and endurance of Your people there, who face such a variety of harassment and yet remain faithful. May they be filled daily with fresh love, joy and hope, may their presence in society bring peace and harmony, may they shine like stars in the sky as they hold firmly to the Word of life, may their lives bear much fruit for Your Kingdom and may they be a vibrant witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in Whose Name we pray. (Philippians 2:16)

MONDAY 8 In China the authorities are stepping up a policy of withdrawing government social welfare benefits from vulnerable Christians, such as the disabled and elderly, unless they renounce their faith. Christians in the workplace are also coming under increasing pressure to hide their faith

because a low score on the nationwide Social Credit Score (SCS) system, showing their “untrustworthiness”, could drag down the score of the business that employs them as well as the Christian’s own personal score. The SCS slogan is “once untrustworthy, always restricted” suggesting that penalties for a low score will continue for ever. A Chinese Christian leader asks, “Please pray that believers will consistently score very high marks and confound the country’s leaders ... and that SCS will not be used as a weapon against them.”

TUESDAY 9 The Chinese authorities are also starting to enforce a strict ban on printing Christian and other religious literature. Owners of printing businesses and even photocopying businesses are being threatened with heavy fines or prison sentences, as are the staff employed at the businesses. There are also threats to forcibly close down the businesses. Sending such materials by post is forbidden, along with any other books that have not been passed by the government censors. Praise God that His Spirit moves where He pleases and cannot be stopped by human rules. Pray that He will continue to be at work in China, drawing many to the Lord Jesus. (John 3:5-9)

WEDNESDAY 10 Two Christian families from Pasing-Kang village, Saravan province, Laos, were evicted from their homes on 10 October because they refused to renounce their Christian faith. The village authorities banned any other villagers, whether relatives or church members, from taking aid to the seven evicted

individuals, who had found shelter in a hut in the forest but had no food or blankets or change of clothes. Such harsh treatment occurs quite often to rural Christians in Laos. Pray that those targeted may have grace from the Lord to sustain them and even to count their sufferings joy. (James 1:2-4)

THURSDAY 11 More than a year ago, Laos passed a “Law on the Evangelical Church”. It grants Lao Christians the right to conduct services and preach, and to maintain contacts with other Christians outside of Laos. However, churches must obey other Lao laws and be self-funding. It was in the rural parts of the country that this law was needed, as Christians in the big cities did not suffer harassment. But news of the new law has taken a long time to filter out into the countryside, where Christians are often severely persecuted, for example, having their homes destroyed. A number of workshops and seminars were organised over the last year in rural parts of Laos to make the new law known. Pray that real change will be seen in 2021 as the legal rights and freedoms of Christians become known across the whole country.

FRIDAY 12 Thank the Lord for the early release from prison of Pastor A Dao in Vietnam, having served four years of his five-year sentence. One of the Montagnard people-group, who live mainly in the Central Highlands and have been persecuted for decades because of their Christian faith, Pastor A Dao had been jailed because he was calling for religious freedom for Montagnards. Pray that the Lord will

enable him to recover from his long ordeal and will bless and guide his future ministry.



Pastor A Dao, released from prison

SATURDAY 13 Myanmar's ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, won the general election on 8 November. The NLD announced it would form a national unity government, and would be inviting ethnic minority parties to work with it, an offer it did not make when it won the last election in 2015. This offer is very significant for Christians in Myanmar, most of whom come from the non-Burman ethnic minorities, and also for the Rohingya Muslims – all these ethnic and religious minorities have suffered great persecution. Pray that the new

government will bring an end to this abuse.

SUNDAY 14 Lord Jesus, in a world of migrants and refugees, where hostility, poverty and natural disaster cause millions to uproot themselves and move, we pray especially for the many Christians displaced by persecution or violence. Homeless, unwanted and destitute, may they find hope and comfort in remembering that You too fled danger as an infant with Your parents, and in Your years of earthly ministry travelled without knowing where You would lay Your head at night. Fill them with Your healing peace, especially those who have been displaced repeatedly, and comfort them with the knowledge that their citizenship is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20)

MONDAY 15 "Our joy is now complete," said an Egyptian Christian mother. Her two sons had been beheaded by Islamic State terrorists in February 2015 after they and 18 other Egyptian migrant workers, along with one Ghanaian, had been captured in Libya. Today Egyptian Christians celebrate the anniversary of the martyrdoms. The victims were selected because they were Christians and refused to embrace Islam. When their bodies were discovered in 2017, the remains of the Egyptians were repatriated but no one could trace the family of the Ghanaian martyr, Matthew. Egyptian Christians began to ask if Matthew could be buried in Egypt with the 20 Egyptian martyrs, and eventually this was done. It was then that the bereaved Egyptian mother expressed her joy. Praise God for the way in

which Egyptian Christians see dying for the Lord as the greatest gift He could bestow.

TUESDAY 16 The general election in Jordan on 10 November had a very low turnout, due to Covid-19 and was immediately followed by a four-day total lockdown. The Islamic Action Front party (linked to the Muslim Brotherhood) dropped from 15 to ten seats (out of 130 in the lower house of parliament) and complained that the system was unfair. No women were elected this time, apart from the 15 seats reserved for women. Christians had a generous quota of nine seats and there were three seats reserved for Chechens and Circassians. Pray for King Abdullah II who holds a lot of political power, appointing the government and all 65 members of the upper house. Pray also for Christians in the Jordanian parliament that they may be salt and light, and a channel of blessing to their country.

WEDNESDAY 17 At the time of writing, American troop numbers in Afghanistan were set to be roughly halved by mid-January, a decision which many observers feared could allow violence to escalate again in Afghanistan. Attacks by Taliban insurgents on Afghan government targets had continued during many months of a supposed peace process. Please pray for just and lasting peace in this war-torn country. Pray also for the protection of Afghan believers (converts from Islam); the less law and order, the more vulnerable they are.

THURSDAY 18 A referendum held in Algeria on 1 November voted in favour

of a set of changes to the constitution, which had already been approved by the Council of Ministers and both lower and upper houses of parliament. These changes have removed the guarantee of “freedom of conscience”, leaving only “freedom of opinion” and “freedom to exercise worship”, although the latter is restricted for non-Muslims by other laws. The removal of “freedom of conscience” is a troubling step, especially in a country where most of the indigenous Christians are converts from Islam or their children. At present there is no law to prevent Algerians choosing or changing their faith. An Algerian church leader wrote to Barnabas Fund that he hoped God would raise up wise leaders whom He could use to help the Algerian Church live in peace as they wait for the return of Christ. Please make his hope into your prayer.

FRIDAY 19 Poor tribal Christian parents in Bangladesh are often persuaded to send their children away to be educated, thinking this will give their little ones a better future. The same persuasion is applied to poor Hindu and Buddhist families. The Christian, Hindu and Buddhist children are then forcibly converted to Islam in Islamic madrassa schools. Pray that the Bangladeshi authorities will be successful in preventing this “trafficking” and that parents will understand the true agenda of the Muslims who go door-to-door offering to “help” the impoverished families.

SATURDAY 20 Praise God for the many Fulani Christians in Burkina Faso and pray for their protection. As converts from Islam, Fulani Christians are

very much a target for zealous Fulani Muslims, especially Fulani Christians who are active in spreading the Gospel. They are recognisable by other local people as Fulanis, from their physical appearance. Pray that the Fulani Church will continue to grow and that God will keep our brothers and sisters safe.

SUNDAY 21 **O LORD, our rock, our fortress and our deliverer, we pray for Christians suffering violence or injustice because of their faith in Your Son Jesus Christ. Be their refuge, shield and stronghold. If it is Your will, protect them from those who seek to harm them, and save them from their enemies. If not, please strengthen them to endure. Whatever troubles come to them, fill them with a peace that passes understanding. May their loving and forgiving reactions bring glory to our Saviour and their Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who was betrayed, falsely accused and crucified, in Whose Name we pray. (Psalm 18:1-3)**

MONDAY 22 In October the Cameroonian authorities closed 62 schools in the far north, to protect pupils and teachers from continuing attacks by Boko Haram, whose headquarters are just over the border in Borno state, Nigeria. At least 13 schools had been torched by Boko Haram in the previous two months, but most of the Boko Haram attacks in Cameroon last year were by suicide bombers, mainly women and children. Some of the thousands of Cameroonian children displaced when their schools closed were given new teachers – from the Cameroonian army. As Nigerian children blow themselves up to kill

others and Cameroonian children are sent miles from home and taught by soldiers, pray that the God who makes wars cease will bring peace and healing to all these young lives. (Psalm 46:9)

TUESDAY 23 Although a secular state, Chad's politics are dominated by the Muslim majority, as are the armed forces, civil service and business. Discrimination against Christians is the norm in Chadian society, which has a long history of Muslims oppressing Christians, including Muslims raiding non-Muslims to seize them as slaves. Muslim superiority was reinforced during colonial times. The result is that Christians are the poorest section of society, uneducated and vulnerable to exploitation. Because of their poverty Christians were the most severely affected by the multiple natural disasters which afflicted Chad last year including Covid-19, measles, meningitis, chikungunya, polio and cholera as well as drought and floods. Pray that Chadian Christians will be strong and united in the Lord.

WEDNESDAY 24 The Chinese Communist Party has installed facial recognition cameras inside more than 50 three-self (i.e. registered) church buildings and 16 Buddhist and Taoist temples in Poyang county, Jiangxi Province. Poyang county has a large Christian population. If an unknown face is seen in church, the police come to find out who it is. The cameras also listen to the content of the sermon. Nervous church leaders have reacted by hiring security guards to disperse their congregations after services, to

ensure that church members chatting together do not say something against the government, which the cameras would pick up. As surveillance reaches new heights in China, pray that Christians will not give way to fear, but will respond with courage and wisdom.

THURSDAY 25 At least 21 residents of Lisasa village, in north Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo were killed during a terrorist attack on 30 October. Fifteen of the dead were women. Other villagers were abducted, the health centre looted, a church desecrated and homes burnt. Days earlier, an attack on Baeti village in the same province killed 18 people, with several homes and a church building burnt. The suspected perpetrators are the Islamist group ADF (Allied Democratic Forces), originally from neighbouring Uganda. Pray that the mainly Christian people of North Kivu and neighbouring Ituri province, who have suffered at least 1,105 terrorist killings in the last two years, may have grace to follow their Lord's command to forgive their enemies and pray for those who persecute them. (Matthew 5:44)

FRIDAY 26 After a five-month break during the Covid-19 crisis, the committee overseeing the licensing of church buildings in Egypt resumed its work and approved 100 new registrations. This was the seventeenth batch of licences issued since a law was introduced in September 2016 to facilitate the registration of churches. Thank the Lord and pray that the remaining 1,992 applications for licences will be granted soon. Until

they are granted, worship activities on the premises are illegal.

SATURDAY 27 Eritrean Christian asylum-seekers in Israel are so marginalised and cut off by language and culture that many were at first unaware of the coronavirus pandemic last year and did not know what precautions to take. The low-paid jobs they tended to have in restaurants and hotels disappeared. At the same time, however, there was good news when the Israeli Supreme Court repealed the disastrous Deposit Law on 23 April 2020. This law had required employers to take 20% of the earnings of asylum-seekers for a fund which they could only access if they voluntarily left Israel. Barnabas is continuing to help the most vulnerable including survivors of torture and human-trafficking and those with disabilities and chronic illnesses. Pray that the Lord will continue to soften the hearts of the Israeli government towards the Eritrean Christians who fled terrible persecution in their homeland and expected to find safety and security in Israel.

SUNDAY 28 **O Lord Jesus, who called little children to Yourself, we bring to you the children of persecuted Christian families, and children who have made a decision to follow You against the beliefs of the rest of their family. Please be a light to their paths, whether they face poverty, discrimination and hardship or opposition and even violence, because they choose to be Yours. Help them to grow strong in their faith, protect and comfort them in the face of danger. May we all learn from their example of simple trust and unwavering love for You. (Luke 18:16)**

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