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BRINGING HOPE TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

JULY/AUGUST
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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.

July

THURSDAY 1 “They were going round houses targeting Christians, NGO workers and those educated in Western schools,” said a resident of Geidam in Yobe State, north-east Nigeria. Two Christians and two Muslim school-teachers were selected to be killed in this way by militants from Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) who took control of the town on 23 April. The ISWAP militants dropped leaflets saying, “We are fighting unbelievers; Christians and any other person or group going against the teaching of Islam even if they are Muslims.” Pray that Nigerian Christians may have grace to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them (Matthew 5:44).

FRIDAY 2 Kaduna State, Nigeria, has seen a spate of anti-Christian violence. Eight Christians on an evangelistic mission on 26 March were abducted by bandits, who stopped their minibus, which had “The Redeemed Christian Church of God” painted on its side. They were later

released, as were all 39 students, mainly Christians, abducted from a College of Forestry earlier in March. But in April, when a group of Anglican Christians in their church bus were attacked, the Christian driver was shot dead, and four passengers were injured. Another Christian died when a Baptist church was attacked during the Sunday morning service on 25 April. “Glory be to Jesus. We pray for lasting peace in all troubled regions of the country, in Jesus’ Name,” said the pastor of the eight from the Redeemed Christian Church of God after their release. Add your prayers to his.



Forestry college students held at gunpoint

SATURDAY 3 An early morning service had just finished on 30 March in Aye-Tuwar village, Benue State, Nigeria, when gunmen entered and enquired where the senior minister could be found. Within seconds they had shot him dead, along with three of the congregation. They also set fire to houses in the village. Pray for those who will go to church tomorrow uncertain whether they will return home afterwards or whether they will go straight to their heavenly Home.

SUNDAY 4 Lord Jesus Christ, we bring before You our brothers and sisters in Pakistan and ask You to fill them with

courage. We pray that You will guide them into all truth by the power of Your Spirit in the face of that country's harsh "blasphemy" laws. We ask that legislators and judges will apply fairness when cases of "blasphemy" are set before them. Help Your people to communicate the truth respectfully but boldly when You call on them to do so and empower them to be Your messengers in showing their friends and neighbours Your uniqueness and deity. (Matthew 10:19-20)

MONDAY 5 Pakistani Christian Samina and her 13-year-old daughter Shakina both worked as domestic servants but in two different homes. They would travel to and from work together. After work on 19 February, Samina called at Shakina's workplace to collect her but found her daughter was not there. A Muslim man had abducted Shakina and the next day he married her, after forcing her to convert to Islam and change her name to Shazia. Pray that the police will find and rescue Shakina, that she will remain true in her heart to Christ's Name, and that the only new name she is given will be what the Lord Himself gives to those who overcome (Revelation 2:13,17).

TUESDAY 6 Nabeel Masih was only 16 when he was charged with "blasphemy". He was the youngest person ever to be accused under Pakistan's notorious law. Nabeel, a Christian who has always maintained his innocence of the charges, spent over four years in prison until he was released on bail in March. Pray that the LORD who sustains the humble and binds up our wounds will heal Nabeel of all the trauma he has endured (Psalm 147:3,6). Pray that he will be acquitted when he finally faces trial.

WEDNESDAY 7 Maryam and Newish, two Christian nurses in Faisalabad, Pakistan, were accused in early April of "blasphemy" by a Muslim colleague who had a grudge against them. While cleaning a cupboard, one of them had removed a sticker with Quranic verses on it and given it to the head nurse for safekeeping. It was the head nurse who accused them of desecrating the Quran, for which there is a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment according to the Pakistan Penal Code. An angry mob of Muslims gathered, and one stabbed Maryam with a knife. The two nurses were arrested. Pray that the accusations against them will be rejected and they will be set free.

THURSDAY 8 Later in April a further three Pakistani Christian nurses were accused of "blasphemy" by Muslim colleagues, this time at a psychiatric hospital in Lahore. The accusation was to do with a non-blasphemous social media post about the Pakistani government, which Sakina shared and Jessica and Tressa "liked". All three are now in hiding, in fear for their lives. Pray for their protection, remembering also nurse Tabitha, who has been in hiding since January when she was falsely accused of "blasphemy" by colleagues at the maternity hospital in Karachi where she worked. Ask for all four women that the LORD will be their hiding-place, protecting them from trouble and surrounding them with songs of deliverance (Psalm 32:7).

FRIDAY 9 The European Parliament has called for the abolition of Pakistan's "blasphemy" law. With mandatory life imprisonment or death sentences, and no penalty for false accusation, the law is easily abused. Christians are especially

vulnerable because the lower courts tend to give more weight to the word of a Muslim accuser than the words of a Christian accused. So strongly do some Pakistani Muslims feel about anything they perceive as disrespectful to their prophet that they will attack whole Christian communities if an individual Christian is accused of “blasphemy” and threaten anyone who suggests the law should be amended. All this has developed in barely a generation. Lift up to God a situation that seems impossible for humans to resolve and ask Him to act in power (Luke 18:27).

SATURDAY 10 Praise God for an increasing openness to the Gospel amongst Afghan Muslims. But Afghan believers active in outreach continue to face hostility, including curses and death threats. Some results are anxiety, fear and problems sleeping. One Afghan evangelist commented: “Many of the shaming techniques aim to undermine our identity and exclude us from the community, from being Afghan. That really stings.” But hardest of all are the calls they receive from devout and peaceable Muslims, earnestly and lovingly trying to win the evangelists back to Islam. “Pray for courage when we are discouraged and for strength to persevere in this hard calling,” said one evangelist. Another asked: “Join us in praying God’s blessing over those who curse us and ask that those who are presently enemies of the Gospel will encounter Jesus’ love and become His followers.”

SUNDAY 11 Our loving Lord Jesus, we stand with our brothers and sisters in Iran, asking that You will sustain them in the trials they face. We praise

You for the growth of Your Church in that land despite the restraints placed on believers by a repressive regime. Thank You for those who continue to serve You in their homeland although being repeatedly pressed to leave. For those subject to a harsh cycle of being released and re-arrested, we ask You to strengthen their faith and that they may know in their hearts that You cause all things to work together for good for those who love You. (Romans 8:28)

MONDAY 12 Four Christian converts from Islam were arrested by Iranian intelligence agents who raided their individual homes or business premises in Dezful, south-west Iran, on 19 April. Two days later they were released. The following day another 10 to 15 Dezful converts were arrested and released the same day, after being forced to sign agreements that they would not associate with other Christians. Such arrests and such agreements (often with hidden wording that renounces the Christian faith) are a common method of harassment by the authorities and appear to be part of a government strategy to wear down converts psychologically so that they either emigrate or return to Islam. Pray that the LORD will keep our brothers in perfect peace, their minds steadfast, as they trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3).

TUESDAY 13 Homayoun (62), who has Parkinson’s Disease, is currently serving a two-year jail sentence in Iran for being a member of a house church (Farsi-speaking churches composed mainly of converts from Islam). His wife Sara (42) is serving an eight-year sentence because she was not only a member but also active in organising the house church.

Pray that the Lord will sustain them, remembering especially Homayoun's health. When they come out of prison various other punishments await them, including a two-year ban on membership of any social group. They have appealed for a re-trial; pray that this appeal will be successful and the re-trial will acquit them of any wrongdoing.

WEDNESDAY 14 Three Iranian Christian men, all converts from Islam, were found guilty on various charges related to their Christian activities last year and given prison sentences. In Iran, prison does not start immediately, but one is summoned later, perhaps many months after the sentence was announced, to come to prison and start serving the sentence. Sasan, Habib and Pooriya, however, did not wait to be summoned but presented themselves at prison and asked if they could start their sentences. All three are now out of prison; the two with one-year sentences were given furlough and the third was let off the last 39 days of his much shorter sentence. Thank the Lord that their time in prison was shortened, and pray that they may rejoice to have suffered for the Name of Christ, as the apostles did after they had been jailed and flogged (Acts 5:41).

THURSDAY 15 A pastor in Laos was released from prison on 9 April, three days after being convicted of "creating disorder" and "disrupting unity". Pastor Sithon had been arrested about 13 months earlier for conducting church services without permission. At the time of his arrest he had refused to sign a document renouncing his Christian faith. He was awarded a one-year sentence on 6 April but, having already been detained for longer than that, he was

soon released. Lao Christians had been praying for him throughout. "We're very excited that he's still alive ... He may have been sick and frail in prison, but he'll be very happy to be able to serve God again," said one. Pray that Lao Christians will be encouraged by seeing their faithful prayers answered.



Pastor Sithon Thippavong

FRIDAY 16 Continue to lift to the Lord our brothers and sisters suffering for His sake in North Korea. Horrifying reports of what they are forced to endure for Christ's sake emerge from time to time from this secretive communist state with its religion-like ideology of *juche* (self-reliance). But North Korean Christians rely on their God, not on themselves, and trust in the Name of the LORD, fearing only Him. Pray that He will be their light as they walk in the darkness of 21st century North Korea (Isaiah 50:10).

SATURDAY 17 Rural pastors in China face many challenges. Most have no theological training and live on such a low income that educating their children is a struggle and even putting a roof over their heads can be difficult. They face hostility from the majority society and live with the constant

possibility of having their church meetings disrupted or being arrested, fined or worse. These pressures cause such stress and exhaustion that some leave their ministries. Pray that these weary pastors will fix their thoughts on Jesus, hold on to the courage and hope with which they started (Hebrews 3:1,6) and remember that “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work” (Hebrews 4:9-10 EHV).

SUNDAY 18 We thank You, Lord, for the growth of Your Church in China. Thank You for the courage and faithfulness of our brothers and sisters in the face of persecution and repressive controls. We lift to You those Christian leaders who refuse to compromise on the supremacy of Your law despite the temptation of gaining relative security this way. As surveillance increases and the monitoring of church activities intensifies, we pray that You will assure Your people that their lives are in Your hands and nothing escapes Your notice. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Psalm 139:7)

MONDAY 19 Covid-19 unexpectedly delayed the timetable for producing a modern translation of the New Testament in the Tajik language, but Christians in Tajikistan saw many blessings arising from the delay. For it allowed them, through respect and perseverance, to develop good relations with government officials. Not only do they now have the necessary permits but also they trust that the relationships they have developed will be helpful in the future when they hope, God willing, to translate the Old Testament and print

the whole Bible. Pray that the Tajik government officials will continue to look kindly on the Christians and facilitate the distribution of God’s Word.

TUESDAY 20 Please continue to pray for a young Christian mother in Central Asia, a convert from Islam, who has been thrown out by her husband and also by her father. After a while her husband told her to come back home but, when she did, he mocked her and threw her out again. Now she lives with her father, who constantly presses her to deny Christ but does not beat her as her husband did when he discovered she was going to church. Christians in the capital city invited her to live there but she decided to remain at her father’s house in the village, praying and believing that her husband will change. Pray with our courageous sister that all her family will come to faith in the Lord Jesus.

WEDNESDAY 21 Muslim-background believers in Turkmenistan rejoiced when the authorities gave them permission to meet again for worship in their five registered church buildings, of course with Covid precautions. They asked believers across the world to thank the Lord with them. Pray that further church buildings will be granted registration, as just five for all the evangelicals in the country is not enough. Praise God for the Christians’ spirit of thankfulness, living as they do in a poor and very strict country where it has now been made illegal to queue outside the shops selling state-subsidised food. The subsidised food is more affordable, but there is not enough for everyone who needs it. Sometimes shoppers are obliged to buy other goods as well, e.g. portraits of the president.

Pray that the Christians' hope, peace and joy in such circumstances will be a powerful witness to the majority society.

THURSDAY 22 Tatarstan, now a republic in the Russian Federation, has been dominated by Islam for more than a millennium. Tatarstan's Christian community find that their main challenges come from Islamist terrorist groups, not from the authorities. The security situation has improved since 2014 when many Islamists left to fight in Syria and the authorities clamped down on those who remained. However, the authorities warn that a second generation of Islamist militants is expected to emerge – the home-schooled children of Wahhabi Muslim parents, who have been taught to separate themselves from mainstream society and follow a strict and intolerant form of Islam. Pray that these Muslim youngsters may not grow up to hate non-Muslims or believe it right to attack them; ask that each will have a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.



Baptisms at a church in Chechnya
[Image: Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists]

FRIDAY 23 Praise God for the Christian presence in Chechnya, a strongly Islamic Russian republic with a reputation for Islamist violence. Earlier this year a church in the capital Grozny (which means “terrifying” in Russian) celebrated its 135th anniversary. The Chechen people used to have their own pagan religion, focusing on the worship of trees, especially pear trees, but converted to Islam between the 16th and 19th centuries. Sufism is followed by many, which is a mystical type of Islam focusing on the quest for a personal relationship with Allah. Pray that many Chechen Muslims will find the fulfilment of their desires in Jesus Christ.

SATURDAY 24 Thank you for your prayers for “A”, a Christian convert from Islam who was facing court charges in Saudi Arabia. He has been acquitted of the charge of financial misconduct as no evidence was offered to support the accusation. But A still faces charges of trying to convert Muslims to Christianity and of helping his sister (who has also become a Christian) to flee the country against the wishes of her family. Ask that the Holy Spirit will be A's advocate to stand with him, help him and bring him justice (John 14:16).

SUNDAY 25 Heavenly Father, we praise You for those turning to You from other religious backgrounds across the world. Thank You that many are experiencing for the first time the joy of sins forgiven and the comfort of knowing You as a loving Father. We pray that they will know Your presence in whatever difficulties they face, particularly those ostracised or even banished from their families as a result of trusting You. Help them to realise

that You richly reward those who give up even close family ties to follow Your Son and our Saviour Jesus Christ, in Whose Name we ask. (Matthew 19:29)

MONDAY 26 Thank the Lord for answered prayer, as two of the four Christians arrested in Somaliland in January have been released (and were then deported). Continue to pray for the other two, now charged with apostasy from Islam, propagating Christianity and other offences, remembering also their baby who was taken into detention with them. Four more Christians, also converts from Islam, were arrested in February and face various charges related to their Christian faith and activities. Somali Christians ask prayer that the detainees will know God's presence and His strength, that their lawyer will have wisdom and boldness, and that they will be released soon.

TUESDAY 27 Many Ugandan churches refuse to have anything to do with Christians from a Muslim background, presumably because they are fearful of Islamist threats. Often these converts have also been rejected by their Muslim relatives and have no one else. Their lives may be in severe danger. Some have been permanently injured by violent attacks. Pray that more Ugandan churches will be willing to risk their own safety to help their persecuted brothers and sisters.

WEDNESDAY 28 Ugandan Muslims occupy many strategic positions in security, politics, law and media, despite the country having a large Christian majority. Some Ugandan Christians fear that Christian values are being systematically undermined by some of the Muslims in senior positions. Christian converts from Islam often find

themselves facing difficulties because of Muslim officials. They ask prayer that Church leaders will respond with a wise and unified strategy to counteract the Islamists' agenda.

THURSDAY 29 The Burundian government has been reaching out to many Arab countries, building diplomatic relations with them in the hope of relieving the financial difficulties facing Burundi. As a result, mosques, Islamic health centres, an Islamic university and many Muslim organisations have been established in this country which is about 90% Christian, with Muslims estimated at less than 3%. Please pray that Burundian Christians will be active, wise and loving to ensure that the Christian faith continues to be freely proclaimed in their country.

FRIDAY 30 After launching a major attack on the town of Palma in northern Mozambique on 24 March, Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) boasted on its internet news site of killing at least 55 people including Christians, Mozambican soldiers and "crusaders" (meaning Westerners). The brutal IS-linked terrorist group operating in northern Mozambique leaves horribly mutilated bodies. Pray that these terrorists who think they are pleasing Allah with their violence will meet the living God, the Prince of Peace, and learn to follow Him.

SATURDAY 31 Chad's President Idriss Déby died on 20 April from wounds sustained in a battle between the Chadian army and Islamist terrorists. He had led Chad for three decades and his armed forces were considered one of the most effective in the region for dealing with militant Islamists. At the

time of writing, Chadian Christians are very concerned that Islamist insurgents may seize political power. Pray that the Lord's hand will be over Chad, and that the new leadership (currently Déby's son Mahamat) will govern with wisdom and justice, ensuring the protection of the Christian community, who have been suffering at the hands of both Muslims and followers of traditional African religions.

August

SUNDAY 1 O Jesus, our Good Shepherd, we thank You for your loving care for Christian children. We pray that children growing up in cultures where they are disadvantaged and despised will know the security of Your protection. Please provide for their educational needs and confound the plans of those who seek to disrupt or limit their schooling. Fill them with perseverance and resilience as they encounter difficulties. May they know from a young age the wisdom that You withhold from the wise and learned, and treasure it throughout their lives. (Matthew 11:25)

MONDAY 2 The VHP, a hard-line Hindu group in India, has sent to the authorities in Madhya Pradesh state a list of 56 Indian Christian missionaries whom the VHP alleges to be using methods that are illegal in Madhya Pradesh, that is, fraud, force or allurement. Christian missionaries engaged in valid evangelism are often falsely accused of using such techniques, which are punishable under law in nine of India's states. Pray that those working to make disciples of Christ across the vast nation of India will know

the sure presence of Jesus with them always, no matter what happens to them (Matthew 28:18-20).

TUESDAY 3 A devastating second wave of Covid-19 began surging across India in mid-March and was still increasing in early May. Amongst the hundreds of thousands of deaths are many church leaders and ministry leaders. Ask the Lord to raise up others to take their places, anointing them with the necessary gifts and giving them strength to handle their challenging task. Frightened congregations, many without income and many sick or dying, need pastoral care. Ministries of all kinds need wise leaders to keep the Lord's work going. We may not know in detail what the needs are today, but our Father knows what our Indian brothers and sisters need before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8).



Distribution of food aid from Barnabas to Covid-affected Christians in India

WEDNESDAY 4 By early May Nepal was struggling to contain an explosion of Covid-19 cases as bad as, if not worse than neighbouring India's. Transport and logistics are difficult in this mountainous country, and the health system is weaker, with fewer doctors per capita than India. "Christians who are Covid patients don't get good care in the hospital; they are discriminated against," wrote a Nepalese Christian to Barnabas Fund, adding that a wave of persecution against Christians had coincided with the start of the second Covid wave in Nepal. He reported that more than 15,000 churches were closed, leaving thousands of pastors penniless alongside countless daily-wage earners who had lost their work. Many Christians had died and burial places were becoming an issue, with the government refusing to give land for this in the capital Kathmandu. Ask the Father of compassion to have mercy on Nepal and especially the beleaguered Christians (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

THURSDAY 5 "Persecution of Christians in Nepal is increasing. Evangelists, pastors, Christian workers have been arrested with false allegation. Street evangelists have been beaten badly. Christian workers/missionaries' activities have been closely tracked and monitored. Hate messages against Nepalese Christians have been spreading through social media. Conversion is criminalised." This summary of the situation of Christians in Nepal was sent to Barnabas Fund by a senior church leader. Pray that Christians will not give way to fear, but will stand firm in the Lord and focus on "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Timothy 1:1).

FRIDAY 6 Praise God that more Eritrean Christians have been released from

prison. The 22 freed on 11 April had been held only a few weeks after being arrested at a prayer meeting. The 14 released from a prison on Dahlak Island on 27 April had been imprisoned for four years. At the time of writing there are thought to be at least 129 Christians still in prison in Eritrea. With God's help, let us pray them free!

SATURDAY 7 Amongst the Eritrean Christians released in the last amazing year was Twen Theodoros (37) who had been in prison for 16 years. She survived the very harsh Wi'a prison, where a meningitis outbreak killed hundreds of prisoners including about 50 Christians. She survived time in a shipping container. She survived a labour camp, with hard work and inadequate food. All the time she led and cared for other women prisoners, sometimes even taking their punishment beatings for them. When she fell sick she was allowed to go home to her family. Instead of taking the opportunity to flee the country, she reported back to the prison again after her medical treatment was complete. Now free, Twen has again refused to consider escaping and is determined to stay in Eritrea. Pray that the Lord will continue to use our brave sister for His purposes and glory.

SUNDAY 8 Lord Jesus Christ, we remember our brothers and sisters suffering imprisonment in Your Name around the world. We ask for vision to intercede for them as if we were suffering alongside them. May the joy of the Lord be their strength in these days of trial. We pray that they will be able to draw comfort from the fact that the Word of God is not chained. Please empower them by Your Spirit to speak boldly and graciously to

their persecutors. May their testimony carry conviction that leads others to Christ. (2 Timothy 2:9; Hebrews 13:3)

MONDAY 9 An American Christian living in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus has been charged with illegal importation, after being found in possession of 35 Bibles, 178 New Testaments and two boxes of John's Gospel, all in Farsi or Arabic. Ryan Keating denied the charges and was released on bail to await his court case; pray that he will be acquitted. Pray that the Good News that God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16) may be made known in Northern Cyprus to people of all languages and backgrounds, despite the efforts of the authorities.

TUESDAY 10 Thank the Lord for a ruling by a US federal judge that a university Christian Union in Michigan can be allowed to insist that its leaders are professing Christians. Wayne State University had argued that the Christian Union's policy was discriminatory, but the judge said that other student groups were allowed to set restrictions on leadership or membership, so the university itself had been discriminatory to expect a Christian group to appoint non-Christians to leadership positions. Pray that this ruling will set a precedent for other universities.

WEDNESDAY 11 Praise God that on 24 April US President Biden recognised the Armenian Genocide, as the US Congress had in 2019. But many other governments have not yet recognised as genocide the deaths of 3.75 million

Armenian, Assyrian, Syriac and Greek Christians under the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Days before Biden's statement, Jewish leaders in Australia called on the governments of Australia and Israel to recognise the genocide. Barnabas Fund has run petitions this year, asking the governments of Australia, New Zealand and the UK to recognise the genocide. Pray that other world leaders will follow Mr Biden's example, for such recognition would help to prevent future massacres of vulnerable Christian minorities.



This Armenian church building in Mekhaven, Nagorno-Karabakh, was demolished by Azerbaijani forces after the end of last year's war [Image: BBC]

THURSDAY 12 The Armenian Christians of Nagorno-Karabakh have been described as “God-fearing, gentle, friendly and hospitable people”. Much of the enclave in which they live was seized by Muslim-majority Azerbaijan last year and many Armenian civilians were tortured and abused, with several dying in captivity. Nagorno-Karabakh is full of spiritual significance to

Armenians, the world's first Christian nation. It has many ancient churches and other historic Christian sites, but these are being vandalised and destroyed in the areas now controlled by Azerbaijan. Ask that, if it is the Lord's will, He will bring an end to this persecution which Armenians have suffered so long.

FRIDAY 13 Last year saw an encouraging number of Muslims in Mauritania committing their lives to the Lord. Much suffering was caused by Covid-19 in this impoverished country which is 90% Sahara desert, but Christians were active in helping the neediest, which softened some hearts towards Christianity. As lockdown obliged people to use social media more, it seems that more were reading Gospel messages. Please pray for the new Christians that they will be protected from persecution whether by family and community or by the authorities, and that they will grow in the knowledge and love of the Lord.

SATURDAY 14 "Every Muslim guilty of the crime of apostasy, whether by word or action, will be invited to repent over a period of three days. If he does not repent within this time limit, he is to be condemned to death as an apostate and his property will be confiscated by the Treasury." This is a translation of Article 306 of the Mauritanian Penal Code. Although there have been no known executions in Mauritania for any crime since 1987, the possibility of being executed still exists for every Muslim who becomes a Christian. Mauritanian Christians ask prayer that their country will "develop in a more tolerant and open way".

SUNDAY 15 O Lord, Ruler of the Nations, we pray that You will direct those in positions of authority, whether internationally, nationally or locally. May they rule with justice and compassion and with an awareness of their responsibility before God. Guide rulers and lawmakers to be just in their dealings with those who seek to follow You. We pray that You will lead more of Your people into positions of authority to influence society for good. Please enable those who know You to resist any temptation to support policies that run contrary to Your Word. May they pursue Your purposes with an undivided heart. We ask in Jesus' Name. (Micah 6:8; Romans 13:1-5)

MONDAY 16 Morocco is a country of contrasts. The constitution and law favour Islam (Christian evangelism is illegal), the population is almost 100% Muslim, but there is usually little official anti-Christian persecution. The attitude of the local wali (governor) largely determines the treatment of Christians, and in remote rural areas Christians are more vulnerable than in the cities. While Moroccan Christians are virtually all first generation converts from Islam with their children/grandchildren and keep a very low profile, there is the remnant of a historic Jewish community dating back at least 1,700 years who are active in business, politics and culture. (There are at present roughly equal numbers of Moroccan Jews and Moroccan Christians in the country.) Pray that Christians will be as accepted by the Muslim majority and be as free to function as the Jewish community are.

TUESDAY 17 Moroccan believers meet discreetly in small fellowships in people's homes. Because the home is considered

the domain of the “woman of the house”, women are prominent in the Moroccan Church and active in many ministries. Pray that our sisters may be equipped and guided in all their service for the Lord. When Moroccan Christians encounter hostility and persecution, it is usually from their own relatives or local community; pray that they will stand firm and not waver in their faith.

WEDNESDAY 18 The Algerian Church “grows where it can in the cracks of a closed society”, say Algerian Christians as they describe how they have to adapt to pressures, harassment and persecution. They ask prayer for their churches to be granted legal registration and that those church buildings which the authorities have forcibly closed be allowed to re-open. The Covid crisis seemed to have a positive impact on their evangelistic efforts, as the Muslim majority thought more than before about death and the hereafter. Pray for more Algerians to put their faith in the Lord Jesus, and that Algerian church leaders will be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit in their tumultuous country.

THURSDAY 19 A group of villages in Myanmar’s Kachin State were targeted by the Myanmar armed forces in early May. Repeated bombardment over several days destroyed many houses, killed two people, injured ten and caused thousands to flee, leaving behind all their possessions. An estimated 95% of Kachin people are Christians. Pray that their faith in the Lord will sustain them amidst the many afflictions they face.

FRIDAY 20 On 3 April the Myanmar army raided three church buildings in Mohnyin Township, Kachin State,

claiming to be searching for leaders of the protests against the military coup in February. Despite a very thorough search, the soldiers apparently found no one and nothing. The previous month security forces had conducted a midnight search at Kachin Theological College and Seminary. They had also broken into a Kachin church in Shan State and detained ten people for two days. Pray that our righteous Lord, who loves justice, will guide those in power in Myanmar so that there may be peace and freedom for all (Psalm 11:7).

SATURDAY 21 Myanmar fighter jets launched air strikes on a Karen village on 27 March, killing at least three people and injuring eight. Day Pu No village is in an area with a large Christian population. A second bombing raid the next day on villages and a displacement camp forced 3,000 Karen people to flee across the border to Thailand. A majority of the Karen ethnic group of Myanmar are Christians and they have lived with violent persecution from the Buddhist ethnic-Burman majority for three generations. Pray that they may be encouraged by remembering that their “light and momentary troubles” are achieving for them “an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

SUNDAY 22 Heavenly Father, we lift up to You our brothers and sisters who are victims of conflict throughout the world. We ask You to comfort those who mourn the loss of loved ones. Please remind them that You see all injustice and there will be a day when they will be vindicated. We pray that those who have fled their homes because of violence will know the loving protection and provision of the God of all comfort. Cause them

to draw strength from the One who endured all manner of evil so that we might taste the riches of His love. We pray in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3)

MONDAY 23 Nineteen people were injured when husband and wife suicide bombers blew themselves up outside a church in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, on 28 March. A security guard had managed to stop the couple entering the church, where the congregation were celebrating Palm Sunday. Thank the Lord that no one (except the bombers) died and pray that the injured will fully recover.

TUESDAY 24 Many Indonesian Christians see a pattern of deliberate systematic government neglect of Christian parts of the country, which have had minimal resources provided for them, thus leaving the people in poverty. East Nusa Tenggara and Papua, for example, are very under-developed. This pattern of discriminatory neglect amounts to a type of persecution that has been going on for decades. Pray that the current President, Joko Widodo, who has done much to support Christians, will also put right this long-term injustice.

WEDNESDAY 25 Indonesia has offered one of its small islands to businessman Elon Musk as a site for the launchpad of his SpaceX project, which aims to put humans on the moon. Biak Island, off the coast of Papua, has a population of about 100,000 people, mainly Christians. They are very concerned about this threat to their traditional livelihoods of fishing in the sea and hunting/gathering in the tropical rainforest. Relocation is not an option in a culture where each family has its traditional hereditary land.

Pray that the Christians of Biak will be able to continue to support themselves from the land they have lived on for centuries. Indonesia has also approached Japan, South Korea, China and India as potential investors in Biak, which is ideally suited for a space project, being situated almost on the equator and having plentiful nickel and copper.



A Christian boy on Biak, who has just been swimming [Image: Alamy]

THURSDAY 26 Five Islamist terrorists, armed with swords, killed four Indonesian Christians as they worked in a coffee plantation in Poso, Central Sulawesi, on 11 May. A fifth managed to escape the attack. The perpetrators were recognised as members of the East Indonesia Mujahideen, a group loyal to Islamic State but which only has ten known members and seems to operate only in Central Sulawesi. Ask the Lord to send His angelic hosts to protect His people in Indonesia.

FRIDAY 27 Official scrutiny of the small Christian community in Tunisia tends to

come in waves. In recent years they find themselves more often questioned by the authorities, more restricted in their comings and goings, and facing more difficulties in finding landlords willing to rent out premises for Christian meetings. At the same time Tunisian society as a whole has grown more open since the Arab Spring ten years ago, the justice system is more independent and fair, there have been two democratic elections and there is gradual economic growth. Pray that the changes in Tunisian society may extend to give greater freedom and acceptance to Christians.

SATURDAY 28 Although Tunisia has many expatriate Christians from Africa and the West, the number of Tunisian believers is only a few thousand, almost all converts from Islam and their children. The second generation believers tend to be bolder and less secretive about their faith than their parents. Pray that the Church will be blessed by the courage of the children together with the maturity and experience of their parents who have suffered much for Christ. Thank the Lord that, after opposition and delays, a “Bible House” bookshop has opened in downtown Tunis. Pray with Tunisian Christians for well established groups of national believers in each of the country’s 24 provinces. At present such groups exist in only nine or ten provinces, while in other provinces the believers are scattered in very small groups not linked to other Christians.

SUNDAY 29 Heavenly Father, we remember those called to leadership of Your church. We intercede for faithful pastors and evangelists that they may exercise their God-given gifts to cause Your Kingdom to be extended. Please grant them

perseverance in times of trial and wisdom to communicate Your truth faithfully. Empower them to handle Your Word accurately so that Your suffering people are built up in their relationship with You. We pray that church leaders will know Your grace in times of discouragement and ask that their families will experience Your protection. We pray this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Timothy 2:15)

MONDAY 30 The tiny Church of national believers in Libya is believed to have doubled in size in 2020 as more Libyan Muslims committed their lives to Christ. This seems to have been partly because of Covid-19 and partly because of tribal feuding and other violent conflict, which together caused people to ask deep spiritual questions. Praise God for all who decided to make Christ their Refuge and Rock in a time of danger. Pray that they will grow in their new faith.

TUESDAY 31 Thank the Lord for answered prayers about Egypt, where Christians say that their situation is now better than anyone can remember before. Humanly speaking, this is due to the efforts of President al-Sisi, who is quick to support them verbally and practically whenever anti-Christian incidents occur. Although there have been a few kidnappings of Christians, the government has exerted itself to get the hostages released. Al-Azhar University now controls most of the mosques so that the extremist Muslim Brotherhood has become much less influential. Pray that the whole Muslim community of Egypt will follow their president’s lead in treating the Christian minority as respected equals. Ask that Islamist extremists seeking his life will not succeed in their plans.

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