



barnabasprayer

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

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

JULY/AUGUST
2020

barnabasfund.org

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

WEDNESDAY 1 “Killings, maiming, burning, looting and kidnapping have continued unabated from village to village,” said Mr Awema Maisamari, national president of the Adara Development Association, Nigeria. The Adara tribe are about two-thirds Christian and only 7% Muslim. They have suffered repeated violence from Fulani militants. Mr Maisamari was describing a spate of attacks from 18 to 21 May, during which 16 villages

were targeted and 20 Christians killed. Since the beginning of 2020, said Mr Maisamari, 107 Christians have been killed in 63 attacks in the same Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State where these 16 villages are. “Our brutalised, dehumanised, terrified and traumatised community members are reeling in pain, ever wondering why this contrived anarchy is still being condoned by the powers that be,” he said. Ask the LORD to be a wall of fire around the villages of His faithful people, to keep them from harm. (Zechariah 2:5)

THURSDAY 2 At about 7.00 p.m. on 14 April, Fulani militants shouting “Allahu akbar, come out, come out!” attacked the village of Hura in Plateau State, Nigeria. Nine Christians were killed, including a pregnant woman, her three-year-old son and two five-year-olds from other families. The attack came only weeks after another raid in the same district in which seven elderly Christians were burnt to death. Ask that our Father in heaven will bless all those who grieve the loss of loved ones, turning their mourning into gladness and giving them comfort and joy instead of sorrow. (Jeremiah 31:13)



Burying the dead of Hura village. The nine victims were laid to rest in two graves

FRIDAY 3 Twenty-eight homes were damaged or destroyed in Hura village on 14 April (see previous), and most of the women and children fled the village after the dead had been buried. Barnabas Fund sent immediate aid including food, blankets, buckets and roofing sheets to repair the houses. Hura villagers had taken in people displaced by previous violent attacks nearby, so that households numbered between 17 and 26 people each when Hura itself was attacked. Aid distribution was hindered by rains, by further Fulani aggression in the area, and by Covid regulations about transport of non-essential items and a ban on groups of more than 50 people. But eventually it was accomplished. “What you have done is rekindle the faith in our people that indeed God cares and He is always with us in our suffering,” said the pastor who coordinated the distribution. Praise God for the generosity of Barnabas supporters, the ingenuity of local organisers in Nigeria, and the renewed faith of the persecuted believers.

SATURDAY 4 “We are tired and we do not want to bother others about our tragedies. We seem always to be reporting deaths and attacks, and people are weary of our reports,” said a village head from Nigeria’s Middle Belt earlier this year, as he tried to explain how the scale of anti-Christian violence is greater even than is reported. Pray that our brothers and sisters in Nigeria will know that they are not forgotten, and that fellow-Christians around the world are not weary of hearing about the attacks and deaths. Ask that they will be comforted by the knowledge that they have a

heavenly Father who knows and cares if even a sparrow falls to the ground and that they are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

SUNDAY 5 **O God of hope, please fill us with joy and peace as we trust in You. In a world of uncertainty and anxiety, when many are mourning for loved ones, when many have lost their means of livelihood, when old familiar ways of living may be gone forever, where the “new normal” is as yet unknown, and where persecution of Your followers looks set to increase, please make us people who overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray this in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. (Romans 15:13)**

MONDAY 6 A “house church” (i.e. unregistered church) in Shangrao city, Guangxin district, Jiangxi province, south-east China was demolished on 27 April. A member of the congregation, which numbers 20+, attributed the attack to the fact that “more and more people believe in Christianity”. If they are caught meeting again, the congregation will be fined 50,000 yuan (£5,700; \$7,000; €6,300). Praise God that the Holy Spirit moves wherever He pleases and cannot be stopped by human efforts. Pray that even the atheist officials who try so hard to suppress the Church in China will come to believe in the Son of Man who gives eternal life. (John 3:8,15)

TUESDAY 7 In mid-April, two Chinese “house church” venues in Fenglingtou town, Guangxin district, were raided. One was attacked by over 30 local thugs, led by town government officials, who stormed into a meeting and told

the worshippers they must display portraits of China's Communist founding father, Chairman Mao Zedong (1893-1976) and of current Chinese President Xi Jinping. They ordered the Christians to disperse and never gather again. The other church was raided by officials who removed a cross, the financial donations and other items. "The government aims at eliminating our faith," commented a member of that frequently harassed church. Pray that its members will be strengthened by remembering that the LORD can do all things and that no purpose of His can be thwarted. (Job 42:2)

WEDNESDAY 8 Pastors in China report that the authorities maintained their crackdown on churches during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, preventing Christians from accessing livestreamed church services. As ever, authorities in different parts of the vast country acted differently, some ordering churches to stop live-streaming and some actually blocking the livestream. Certain churches were also banned from using WeChat, the main Chinese messaging app, which allows groups to communicate together. Pray that, despite all such efforts, Chinese Christians will be able to build themselves up in their faith and keep praying in the Holy Spirit, even if they cannot pray together. (Jude 20)

THURSDAY 9 Praise God that most of the pastors and church ministers held in labour camps in China's Muslim-majority Xinjiang province were released around the beginning of this year. But all those released continue to be monitored and restricted by the authorities in various ways, for example

with electronic ankle tags. Many are being held by force in the places of their registration. Please pray for courage and wisdom for these faithful servants of the Lord and that He will show each one how they can continue to build up His people and extend His Kingdom in their present situations.

FRIDAY 10 A church member had two ribs broken when about 100 police stormed into a church service being attended by some 20 worshippers, and wrestled adults to the ground as children screamed. Xingguang Church in Xiamen, a popular tourist city in south-east China, is a "house church", which had been coming under pressure from the authorities to register and thus allow Communist state officials to monitor its activities. When the attack happened on 3 May, the worshippers were singing *Amazing Grace*. Pray that God's grace will continue to bring each one "through many dangers, toils, and snares".

SATURDAY 11 Rumours swirled in April about Kim Jong-un, Supreme Leader of North Korea, after he disappeared from public view for some weeks. But he then reappeared again without explanation, so the idea of a change of leadership in the secretive and closed nation was quashed. The extreme repression of North Korean Christians therefore continues. Pray for daily grace for those living out their normal lives, never knowing when they may be arrested, and for those already in the dreaded labour camps. May all know God's sustaining power and unquenchable hope.

SUNDAY 12 **O LORD, who commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous, make us brave and bold to face a post-**

Covid future in which so much that is familiar and normal has changed, perhaps for ever. We praise You for Your mighty resurrection power that raised Jesus from the dead, and we ask for You to empower us and our persecuted brothers and sisters to face whatever is to come. May we glorify You by our lives in the post-Covid world and reflect the character of Your Son Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray. (Joshua 1:6)

MONDAY 13 Locusts in Pakistan and Iran were predicted in May to become the worst outbreak for 50 years. The unusually warm and wet weather in wintertime has allowed an extra generation of breeding this year, thus posing a major challenge to food security. The third generation was expected to hatch in June-July. East Africa was bracing itself for a third locust generation at the same time. A female locust can lay more than 100 eggs in her lifetime, so each generation is far bigger than the one before. Ask our sovereign LORD, who made the heavens and earth and for whom nothing is too hard, to halt the devastating progress of the locusts. (Jeremiah 32:17)

TUESDAY 14 Anna, aged 85 and blind, used to grow all her food on her little plot of land, until locusts destroyed her crop. After three days living on water and a daily half cup of milk from a neighbour, Anna thought she was going to die. Then her pastor visited to tell her that there was food aid for her at the church. Anna thought she was dreaming! But she called her little grand-daughter to lead her and they collected the life-saving supplies of maize, beans and oil, provided by

Barnabas Fund for tens of thousands of locust-affected Christians in Uganda. Thank the Lord for the generosity of Barnabas supporters and ask that aid may reach all those in need.



Anna's grand-daughter leads her to church to collect food supplies from Barnabas Fund's Project Joseph. "May God bless whoever has contributed to this food," said Anna. "I am happy and I am going to prepare my meal now. Ooohhh ... thank you, God!"

WEDNESDAY 15 "Pray with us for God's intervention that He may control the weather so that [the River Nyamwamba] may stop overflowing ... Amidst the lockdown this is what is happening. And in all this we pray that people will turn to God and find the reality of life according to God [not] what man takes life to be." This prayer request to Barnabas Fund from a church leader in Uganda, at a time when floods were devastating its south-west, finished by quoting John 3:16. Only God knows what will be afflicting Uganda at the time you are reading this – coronavirus, floods, locusts or more – but pray that God will work out His sovereign purposes, and that people will turn to Him.

THURSDAY 16 "By God's grace she is still alive," wrote one of our project partners in Uganda. Aisha had been

rejected by her family when she left Islam to follow Christ, but Barnabas Fund paid for her to train in hair-dressing and receive a start-up kit to establish her own business. She married a Christian young man and her hairdressing salon prospered, making enough money to cover the family's food and rent for two rooms (one for the salon, one for the family home). Her husband also contributed financially. Then her brothers threatened her that something bad was going to happen to her business. "During this corona time [Aisha and her husband] had gone in the market looking for food but someone called them on phone that their house was burnt," wrote our project partner, describing the attack by her relatives that destroyed Aisha's home, business and all the family's possessions. Praise God for kind local Christians who are caring for the family. Pray that Aisha and her husband will not be disheartened, fearful or waver in their faith.

FRIDAY 17 A video was trending on Indonesian social media around Good Friday with a poem about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, written by a young Muslim scholar who belongs to Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia. "He has redeemed me from a faith that feels great and proud," the poem says at one point, as well as referring often to His blood. Given that Muslims are taught to believe the crucifixion and resurrection did not occur, the fact that this poem was circulating freely and widely is something to praise God for. Pray that many Indonesian Muslims will come to a personal faith in Jesus who died for their sins and rose again.

SATURDAY 18 "A Christian brother gave us rice. We were very grateful. But soon one of our church members, a widow with three children, came and asked me for help because they had run out of rice and had nothing they could eat that day. The rice that I received then, I gave all to her. Amazingly today God performed again His miracles, Barnabas Fund came and gave us enough rice for us to eat for one month." This was the testimony of Indonesian Pastor Markus, during Covid lockdown. He is one of 330 rural pastors in Indonesia whom Barnabas Fund helped after they lost the income they used to receive from Sunday service offerings, when lockdown prevented Christians meeting together. Praise the Lord who said, "Give and it will be given to you," (Luke 6:38) for the faith of Markus and the grace of God our Provider.

SUNDAY 19 **O God of love, in these difficult times when many have lost their jobs, and some have suffered terrible hunger and deprivation due to Covid lockdown, fill us to overflowing with Your love – a love that never fails, but always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Keep us from selfishness or greed when resources are scarce. Make us generous, cheerful givers who show our love in practical care for those in need, as we continue to trust in Jehovah Jireh, the Lord who will provide. May we show forth the love of Jesus, in Whose Name we pray. (Genesis 22:14, 1 Corinthians 13:7-8)**

MONDAY 20 Seven villagers were killed, eight injured and eight homes burned down when mortar fire from military aircraft hit a village in Christian-

majority Chin state in Myanmar (Burma) on 7 April. Many villagers had hidden under their houses (which are typically built on stilts) but some sustained burns when the house above them was hit and caught fire. The military claimed to be fighting rebel forces, but the dead were civilians including three females and a toddler. Pray for the protection of the Chin people, who are 90% Christian and mostly very poor.

TUESDAY 21 Pastor Tun was kidnapped at gunpoint by Buddhist Militants from his home in Rakhine state, Myanmar, on 19 January 2019. After two weeks looking for him, police and militia gave up the search. In any case, on 1 February 2019 it was reported that the kidnappers had killed him. But Pastor Tun's wife never stopped praying for her husband's safety. On 7 March 2020 he was released and reunited with his wife and three children. Praise God for this wonderful answer to a woman's faithful prayers.



Pastor Tun reunited with his wife, who never gave up believing, hoping and praying for his safe release (Photo: Gospel for Asia)

WEDNESDAY 22 Egyptian police uncovered a plot by an Islamist terrorist cell to attack Christians in Egypt under cover of the nightly Covid-19 curfew.

Apparently, the plot was planned for Easter. Thank the Lord for protecting His people from those who planned to kill them as they celebrated the Lord's resurrection.

THURSDAY 23 Despite its moderate reputation, Jordan is in many ways quite a difficult place for Christians. Conversion from Islam is illegal and therefore evangelism is highly restricted. Family law is strongly Islamic with regard to marriages and children, and children's education is slanted in favour of Islam. Pray for encouragement and safety for all Christians in Jordan, especially those from a Muslim background, who are very aware that they pose a security risk to any church which embraces them.

FRIDAY 24 Saudi Arabia's top court has announced that flogging will cease to be used as a form of criminal punishment in the kingdom. This is immensely significant, as Islam teaches that Allah himself laid down the penalty of flogging for drinking alcohol and adultery, which are therefore classified as *hudud* offences. In Saudi Arabia, flogging has been imposed for many other types of offence as well. Some Muslims believe that leaving Islam (apostasy) is also a *hudud* offence, with a death sentence ordained by Allah. Pray that Saudi Arabia will go one stage further and announce that they will no longer execute people for apostasy. This would enable secret Saudi Christian believers from a Muslim background to make their faith known.

SATURDAY 25 Going on pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your lifetime is

compulsory for Muslims, and more than two million visit Saudi Arabia each year for this purpose. The pilgrimage is also a major spiritual “mountain-top experience” for most who perform its complicated rituals over a period of a few days. This year the key dates are 28 July – 2 August but, at the time of writing, it is unclear whether the Saudi authorities will let it go ahead because the vast crowds of closely packed pilgrims would be a serious issue with regard to coronavirus. Pray that Muslims who are sincerely seeking God will find Him, not in Mecca but in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

SUNDAY 26 **O Jesus, Light of the World, be our guide through the times of uncertainty ahead, with many changes to our lives because of coronavirus. Although the future is hidden from us, we know that You are the same yesterday, today and forever. Nothing is hidden from You, who are the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Teach us to walk by Your light, with Your unchanging Word as a lamp to our feet, no matter what dark days there may be coming. (Psalm 119:105; John 8:12; Revelation 22:13)**

MONDAY 27 When public gatherings were banned in South Sudan because of coronavirus, Christians had to worship at home. “Instead of Sunday services, we now have daily services!” some commented. Churches are training evangelists to visit homes (while keeping a safe social distance) to teach heads of families how to lead meaningful Bible studies. As coronavirus makes life even more difficult in this poor and struggling country, there is an increasing hunger for God. Pray that

South Sudanese Christians will grow in maturity of faith through the hardship of the pandemic.

TUESDAY 28 “Corona doesn’t kill; bread queues do.” This slogan was chanted by protestors (mainly women) demonstrating in the Sudanese capital Khartoum on 12 April. They were flouting a ban on public gatherings which the government had imposed to try to control coronavirus. Four days earlier the price of bread had been doubled by the government, which pays 75% of the costs of the flour that bakeries use. It was bread shortages that had triggered the fall of Islamist President al-Bashir in April 2019 and the April 2020 protestors were his supporters. Some observers fear that the underlying reason for the protests is to try to weaken the transitional government and return to the former strongly Islamist ways of governing. Pray that wise government, toleration and moderation will prevail in Sudan, and that Christians (3% of the population) and other non-Muslims will not be discriminated against.

WEDNESDAY 29 On 21 May Sudan’s Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N, Agar) jointly agreed to create an independent national commission for religious freedom and a Ministry for Peace and Human Rights. The government stated, “We agreed to establish a commission for religious freedom to address all issues relating to religious freedom in order to affirm the principle of peaceful coexistence in the country.” Praise God for this development and pray that the rights and freedoms of

Christians and other non-Muslims in Sudan will be effectively safeguarded by the new institutions.

THURSDAY 30 Eid al-Adha (the Feast of Sacrifice), one of the two most important annual Islamic celebrations, falls this year on 31 July. It commemorates the willingness of Abraham to sacrifice his son (Ishmael in the Quran, not Isaac as in the Bible). Many Muslims around the world will kill a sheep and share the meat with family, friends and neighbours. As Muslims rejoice in God's provision of a ram for Abraham's sacrifice, pray that they will hear and believe the Good News of the Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who died in obedience to His Father's will, to take away the sins of the world.

FRIDAY 31 When the head of the UN World Food Programme tried to express the scale of hunger that he expects the Covid-19 pandemic to cause, he spoke of "widespread famines of Biblical proportions". According to his worst-case scenario, as set out in April, the "hunger pandemic" caused by the virus pandemic, along with other causes such as conflict and locusts, could bring famine to over 30 countries. Let us pray to the God of the Bible, the compassionate and gracious God, who is slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, that He will have mercy on the world He has created and avert the threatened famines. (Exodus 34:6)

August

SATURDAY 1 Please thank the Lord with us for His grace and the generosity of our supporters, which have enabled

Barnabas Fund, in just two months, to feed more than 500,000 hungry Christians suffering from Covid lockdown or locusts or both. Ask for His continued provision, not just for physical hunger but also for the pastoral needs of all Christians isolated by the virus and cut off from their normal sources of spiritual nourishment.

SUNDAY 2 Father in heaven, we rejoice at the faithfulness of persecuted Christians in a time of lockdown, who would rather starve than deny Your Son. Thank you for the example they set us of a faith that will not fail. As life looks set to grow harder for Your people in many ways and in many parts of the world, may our faith grow in response, as we remember our Saviour who laid down His life for our sins on the cross. Whatever happens, keep us steadfast and unswerving as we follow Him, in Whose Name we pray.

MONDAY 3 About five years ago Fulmoni (now aged 67) and her husband left another religion to follow Christ. Her



Fulmoni and the "heavenly gift" of life-saving food from Barnabas

husband died in 2019 and now she lives alone in a small hut. Her two sons have rejected her because of her Christian faith, so she gets no help from her family. Before the coronavirus crisis, Fulmoni sustained herself on a meagre income from daily-wage work as a maid. When lockdown came, she lost her job and was soon struggling to buy food. When Barnabas gave her help, she said, “This is a heavenly gift for me ... I can smile now because I will not die without food. Jesus’ people are loving people.” Thank the Lord with us that we could help Fulmoni and many other needy believers in Bangladesh.

TUESDAY 4 In certain parts of India, where the Hindu extremist BJP party is in power, pastors and even ordinary Christians have been excluded from government food distribution for the poor and needy during coronavirus lockdown. Praise God for their faithfulness in clinging to Christ, even at such cost. Pray that those of us in more comfortable situations may be as willing to sacrifice even our basic needs for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

WEDNESDAY 5 Many Sri Lankan Christians work as “daily pay labourers” in the tea plantations. As such, they earn 700 rupees (£3; \$3.75; €3.40) a day, but only if they manage to pick 17 or 18 kg of leaves. Their housing and hygiene facilities are inadequate, 30% of plantation workers are underweight and 32% have stunted growth. That was the situation before coronavirus. When lockdown came, the tea factories closed for a month so the workers had no income at all. When they opened again, people were only allowed to work half-time. “These poorest of the poor

are struggling to survive,” said Pastor Peter, whose congregation is mostly tea plantation workers. Pray that whatever troubles they face, they will never stop trusting in the LORD, their eternal Rock (Isaiah 26:4).

THURSDAY 6 An Uzbek pastor contacted Barnabas Fund in late May to request prayer for members of Uzbekistan’s parliament as they started to debate a draft law on freedom of religion. Pastor Z asked for prayer that the law will be changed to simplify the process of obtaining church registration and to eliminate the possibility of being fined for possessing Christian literature. At the moment, fines are not being imposed, but nor are churches being registered (though some had been registered in 2019). Until the law is changed, such decisions are at the whim of local officials. “Everything is possible for God!” added Pastor Z.

FRIDAY 7 During Covid lockdown in Kyrgyzstan, when congregations could not gather on Sundays, the authorities asked one pastor if his church could be used for quarantining, including the homeless. He was delighted that the building would continue to serve people and his church members got busy feeding those quarantined. Seeing their zeal, the authorities then gave him lists of isolated elderly people to feed as well, and passes so his church members could move around the city to do this work. Praise God that the Kyrgyz authorities have seen Christians as loving, caring and trustworthy.

SATURDAY 8 A pastor in Turkmenistan wrote to Barnabas Fund about coronavirus: “I think that this crisis has

prompted many believers to cope with spiritual problems, such as fears. Due to the uncertain future, many people experienced fear, which even without this attacked many believers. Of course, there are cases when the brothers fell into despair in the face of the situation with the virus, but we do not stop encouraging and supporting each other.” Praise God that the virus has increased the courage of Christians in a country where severe restrictions and persecution are the norm.

SUNDAY 9 O Jesus, Prince of Peace, in a world of turmoil, where hostility and hatred towards Your people are increasing, where nobody knows what will happen next on a planet infected with coronavirus, we want to thank You for Your promise to give us Your peace, a peace that the world cannot give. Please bless us with that peace, and enable us to keep our hearts untroubled and unafraid. May our peace-filled lives in an anxious world bring glory and praise to Your Name. (John 14:27)

MONDAY 10 Elijah, a young Kenyan pastor, wept with joy when Barnabas’ aid reached his community – nearly everyone he knew had lost their income because of the lockdown. “My peers, many of them slum dwellers and young parents working in the hotel industry, were sent on compulsory unpaid leave and so have no way to fend for their families,” he explained. “Covid-19 has reduced us to helpless individuals even though we are mature men with strength to work.” Pray that these Christian men, distraught because they cannot provide for their families during lockdown, may know the peace that transcends understanding as they

commit their anxieties to the Lord, with thanksgiving. (Philippians 4:6-7)

TUESDAY 11 Mozambique looked set for a good harvest, until Covid-19 brought a lockdown which eventually got so strict that most people were cut off from going to the land where they grew their vegetables, leading to hunger. The government encouraged hand-washing and urged each family to have a bucket of water and soap for this purpose, but many Christians were too poor even to do this. Pastors lost their income as congregations could no longer meet and give offerings. There are similar situations in many other African countries. Pray that the Lord will protect and provide for His faithful people.



Before lockdown got too severe, these young Christians in Mozambique went into the hills to pray and fast for God’s guidance and wisdom to provide a solution for Covid-19

WEDNESDAY 12 Northern Mozambique is mainly Muslim and has become a site of Islamist violence. On Maundy Thursday (9 April) jihadi militants attacked a church building in Muambula village, Muidumbe district, destroyed homes of church workers and vandalised a school. Five people were reported killed. The previous day, at least 52 people had been massacred in Xitaxi, a mainly Christian village, in Muidumbe

district. Relationships between the Muslim majority and Christian minority in this part of Mozambique are generally good, and many Muslims reject the idea that such violence can be done in the name of Islam.

THURSDAY 13 In many countries, Covid-19 came as yet one more affliction to add to many other troubles. A Zambian pastor working in a shanty township of Lusaka wrote to Barnabas Fund about a trio of hardships: lockdown, floods and toxic chemical spray. “Amid the flood in the compound, there came a fierce problem of ‘gassing’ which is a spray of poisonous chemicals into people’s homes mainly at night with a view of killing them! Before the finish of these two problems, we have the issue of corona virus ...” Furthermore, the closing of Zambia’s borders brought extra economic problems. “Join us in prayer...” the pastor begged.

FRIDAY 14 Zimbabwe has stumbled from one crisis to another for many years, but 2019 saw the most severe drought for decades, leading to one of the country’s worst ever food insecurity situations. Families had to miss meals, take their children out of school, sell their precious livestock – and then came coronavirus. There was already hyperinflation, shortage of currency and fuel, and long power outages, but when lockdown came it brought an end to most possibilities of earning. Ask the Lord to have mercy on Zimbabwe, a country where an estimated 60% of the population regularly attended church services before lockdown. In rural areas, some people are too poor to have phones or radio, and so, cut off from church and pastor, they have no idea what is happening.

SATURDAY 15 Pastors in Rwanda are expected to help the needy. Generally they do, and play a vital role in helping the poorest families get education and become self-sufficient. But during the Covid-19 lockdown, the pastors themselves became needy, as congregations could no longer meet so no offerings were given, offerings on which the pastors used to live. Because pastors are seen as those who give to others, they were excluded from the government support available to ordinary people. Barnabas stepped in to provide 250 of the most vulnerable pastors and their families with food and essential hygiene supplies. Pray that each one may be effective in helping his congregation spiritually in this time of uncertainty and anxiety, even if he cannot at present help them practically.

SUNDAY 16 **O Lord God, hear the prayers of Your people around the world in the midst of intense suffering, whether from violent attacks of terrorists, coronavirus lockdown, locusts, extreme weather or other causes. For many their trials seem almost too great to bear. We pray you will remind them that, although weeping may endure for a night, joy comes in the morning, whether in this life or the next. We ask this in the Name of Your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. (Psalm 30:5)**

MONDAY 17 Eleven church buildings were damaged or destroyed by members of the Gan tribe during a three-day attack in the town of Loropeni, southern Burkina Faso, that began on 18 April. Christians are a small minority in Loropeni and the attacks are thought to be have been revenge after police arrested eight local Gan people, including a chief, for their

desecration of a Christian grave on 9 April. The group had attempted to exhume a recently deceased local Gan Christian, the wife of a church deacon, in order to impose a “traditional funeral ceremony” (i.e. a non-Christian funeral). Gan Christians are often persecuted by the wider Gan community, most of whom follow traditional African religions. Pray that Christians, just 6% of the Gan tribe, may be encouraged by remembering that “neither death nor life ... neither the present nor the future, nor any powers ... will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

TUESDAY 18 Two Boko Haram suicide bombers blew themselves up in Cameroon’s Far North province on Sunday 5 April. Seven people died in the blast, including a village chief and two teenage boys. This part of Cameroon has many Muslims but the small border-town which was targeted, called Amchide, is majority Christian. It had been attacked by Boko Haram many times previously. Pray for an end to Boko Haram’s violent efforts to remove Christianity from a large part of West Africa.

WEDNESDAY 19 Islamist terrorist groups such as Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) and Al-Qaeda celebrated coronavirus, describing it as a “small soldier of Allah” sent to attack his enemies. Some are even reported to believe that fighting jihad will guarantee you protection from catching Covid-19. Attacks on Christians in Nigeria’s Middle Belt soared during lockdown, as extremists exploited the fact that the authorities had diverted security resources to combatting the virus. For Christians in such places, the pandemic and the deprivation caused by lockdown

were yet more ways they might die, in addition to the ongoing anti-Christian terrorist attacks. Pray that, in the midst of so many dangers, the Lord will keep in perfect peace those whose hearts are steadfast because they trust in Him. (Isaiah 26:3)

THURSDAY 20 Praise God for His miraculous protection of Nigerian pastor Bayo Famonure when Fulani militants broke into the Christian school where he and his family lived and shot him in the head and leg. His wife Naomi was shot in the back and their two sons were shot in the feet. Pastor Bayo texted afterwards that the bullet did not enter his head and the one in his foot missed all the bones. Likewise, the bullet in Naomi’s back missed her spine and vital organs. Pray for God’s continued protection over Bayo and Naomi’s ministry (which Barnabas has supported) educating Christian children displaced by militant violence, many of them orphans.

FRIDAY 21 Kwara State, in Nigeria’s “Middle Belt”, is viewed as a Muslim state, although there is a substantial Christian presence. “This means that in appointment, opportunity, amenities and even admission to state educational institutions, Christians and Christian-populated communities are being discriminated against,” explained the provost of a theological college in Kwara, describing the situation before coronavirus. “The advent of the virus accentuated this discrimination, so that when food items are distributed, Christians know they will not get and they do not.” Pray that Christians in Kwara will have grace to love and forgive those who are so unjust to them.

SATURDAY 22 “My prayer is that his killers will get to know this Jesus I know. I do forgive them and will pray that the Lord saves their souls,” said Rose (27) the day after she heard that her husband, Pastor Matthew Tagwi, had been killed by Fulani militants in Nigeria. Rose was pregnant and will by now have given birth. Pray for the baby and Rose’s other children, Esther (6) and Joy (2). Rose, who was away from home for an antenatal check when her village was attacked, said she would continue her husband’s work to which they were both called by God. Ask the Lord to give Rose strength and perseverance to fulfil her calling in the weeks, months and years ahead.

SUNDAY 23 **By wisdom You laid the earth’s foundations, O LORD, and by understanding You set the heavens in place. We praise You that nothing in all creation is hidden from Your sight or takes You by surprise. Please pour into our hearts the wisdom and discernment we need to face an uncertain future and growing persecution, where so much is different from what anyone has ever known before. Give us that heavenly wisdom which is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. We ask this in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Proverbs 3:19; James 3:17)**

MONDAY 24 Article 28 of the Russian Constitution states: “Everyone shall be guaranteed freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with others any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them.” But

in practice many Russian Christians do not experience this level of religious liberty. In the last four years, more than 1,300 cases have been brought and fines totalling almost 15 million roubles (£170,000; \$210,000; €190,000) issued. A Russian organisation called the Rule of Law Institute has launched a project to record all violations of freedom of conscience and religion occurring in Russia. Pray for God’s guidance in all they do so that harassment will reduce.

TUESDAY 25 The indigenous Moroccan Church, made of converts from Islam and their children, functions discreetly “under the radar”. Many new believers in Morocco are aged 20-30 and some of them seem to be more willing to make their faith known publicly than those who have been Christians for longer and can remember when more severe harassment and persecution occurred. Pray that all Moroccan Christians will be led by the Holy Spirit in everything they do and that the Lord will continue to add to their number.

WEDNESDAY 26 Only God knows the number of Libyan Christians, as most are secret believers because of the dangers they face for having left Islam. Social media is a major part of sharing the Gospel there. A student who was very ill felt led to enter a church building, where he was healed. He decided to follow Christ and posted his story online, getting 4,200 responses. Ask the Lord to continue His work of drawing Libyans to Himself.

THURSDAY 27 “The Lord did not leave me alone,” said Jamile, a Christian widow in Lebanon. Her husband, a taxi-driver, died in a car accident two years ago,

leaving Jamile to care for their small daughter “Lily”. Jamile got work in a factory but when Covid lockdown came she could no longer manage to provide even food and medicine for herself and Lily. When Barnabas Fund helped her (along with many other needy believers in Lebanon) Jamile overflowed with thankfulness to God. Pray that Christians in Lebanon may remain strong in the Lord as their country passes through a time of hardship that is worse even than the civil war of 1975-1990.



Jamile and Lily

FRIDAY 28 Tomorrow Shia Muslims mark the Day of Ashura, a day of mourning when they remember the death of Hussein, a grandson of Muhammad, at the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD. Some even go as far as self-flagellation to express their grief. Pray that their zealous efforts to please God will lead them to a personal encounter with the Man of Sorrows, Who was wounded for our transgressions and by Whose stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:3, 5 KJV)

SATURDAY 29 The Somalia-based terror group Al-Shabaab have declared coronavirus to be punishment sent by Allah on unbelievers. Their spokesman,

Ali Dhere, called on Muslims to rejoice in the “painful torment” inflicted on non-Muslims who catch Covid-19. He mocked the Somali government’s lockdown measures, which include closing mosques and Islamic seminaries. Pray that such hate-filled rhetoric will fill Somali people with revulsion and that they may instead be drawn to the God who is love. (1 John 4:16)

SUNDAY 30 Heavenly Father, we lift to you today our Christian brothers and sisters in Somalia, few in number and extremely vulnerable to hostility and violence because of their decision to follow Your Son Jesus Christ. Please make Your loving presence very real to each one in their loneliness, and shelter them under the shadow of Your wing to protect them from those who seek to harm and destroy them. May the joy of the Lord be their strength and may the beauty of their Christ-like characters draw more Somalis to follow Jesus, in whose Name we pray.

MONDAY 31 The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom published their annual report on 28 April. It highlighted significant improvements in Sudan and Uzbekistan, but noted that religious liberty in India had taken “a drastic turn downwards” as the Hindu nationalist BJP government increased the pressure on non-Hindus after winning elections in May 2019 with a strengthened majority. Algeria also was noted as a country where religious liberty had been severely violated in 2019 and for the first time it was listed on the Special Watch List. Pray that Christians in all these hard-pressed countries may know that the Lord still loves them with His everlasting love, whether persecution rises or falls. (Jeremiah 31:3)

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