



barnabasprayer

BARNABAS FUND – AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

To help you
pray for the
persecuted
Church

NOVEMBER/
DECEMBER 2018

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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.

November

THURSDAY 1 “Because I am Christian, they made me imitate Jesus on a cross like the crucifixion. We were treated like animals because they look down on Kachins.” One victim in Myanmar (Burma) described being humiliated for his faith by the Myanmar army. Christians in Myanmar have endured violent persecution by the country’s military for half a century. Pray that they may find strength to persevere as they continue to fix their eyes on Jesus, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame. (Hebrews 12:2)

FRIDAY 2 A UN fact-finding mission in Myanmar (Burma) has highlighted not only the genocidal treatment of Rohingya Muslims but also “similar patterns of conduct by security forces” in Kachin and Shan states, where many Christian-majority ethnic minorities live. Its report speaks of violations “often committed with persecutory intent, in a context of

severe discrimination on ethnic or religious grounds. This manifests, for example, in the destruction or ransacking of churches and religious objects during military operations (and sometimes subsequent erecting of Buddhist pagodas).” Pray for a complete change of attitude by the government of Myanmar, that they will cease persecuting Muslim and Christian citizens.



Barnabas Fund is aiding Kachin Christians who have been displaced as a result of the military’s violent campaign of ethnic cleansing

SATURDAY 3 Baptist Christians in Shan State, Myanmar, pleaded for prayer in a letter dated 25 September about what was happening to believers in Wa Special Region. By that point, the authorities had already closed 52 churches, destroyed three churches and arrested 92 pastors. They had also closed a Bible school and arrested 41 of its students, sending them to work as military porters (who are sometimes worked literally to death because of the heavy loads they are forced to carry). Cry out to the Lord to bare His holy arm before the nations and rescue His people in Shan. (Isaiah 52:9-10)

SUNDAY 4 Lord, why were You forsaken, abandoned, on that tree of curse and shame? Why were you left alone, bereft of Your Father's love and care? Today Your people seem forsaken, left alone in cruel hands, persecuted, violently abused, martyred. Make real to them Your presence and your love. For hope is near, glory descends and darkness is banished. Death's sting is no more. Resurrection triumphs o'er the grave. Christ lives for evermore. Lord, Victim, Priest and King, come to Your suffering people, heal their brokenness, bind up their wounds, remove their distress, and be for them a hope and a future. In Your Name we ask, Lord Jesus Christ.

MONDAY 5 Yesterday American sanctions against Iran's vital oil industry came into effect. They are in addition to sanctions already imposed by the US earlier in the year and are likely to cause immense damage to the Iranian economy and hardship to Iranian people. Please pray that God will work out His purposes for Iran, and lift up to Him all those affected by the sanctions. Pray especially for our own Christian brothers and sisters, numbering over half a million, as new suffering is added to the harassment and persecution they already face.

TUESDAY 6 Many Iranian Christians are in jail on a variety of pretexts. Remember them before the Lord (Hebrews 13:3) especially a group of twelve converts from Islam, now about half way through their one-year sentences for a range of supposed offences including "propaganda

activities against the Islamic Republic of Iran" as well as favouring "Zionist Christianity", holding house church meetings, evangelising, and "inclination to the land of Christianity". Pray that each will be sustained and strengthened in their faith.

WEDNESDAY 7 The Iranian authorities appear to be fearful that Christian prisoners will spread their faith to Muslim prisoners. The Christian inmates are therefore sometimes kept together, which they consider a blessing as they can encourage each other with long times of worship and prayer. Pray that their time in prison may be a time of spiritual growth despite the physical deprivation and suffering. Although cut off from Muslim prisoners, they will have contact with Muslim prison guards. Pray that their witness will be powerful and effective.

THURSDAY 8 "It's not a sin nor a crime or against national security to gather at a home and pray," declared Dabrina Bet-Tamraz, an Iranian Christian whose father, mother and brother have all been handed jail sentences. Dabrina's father,



Dabrina's brother, Ramiel, is the latest member of the family to be given a prison sentence

Victor, used to pastor an Assyrian church in Tehran which worshipped in Farsi, the national language of Iran, not in the language of the Assyrian minority. Christian worship in Farsi is illegal in Iran, because it could be understood by the Muslim majority. When the church was closed by the authorities in 2009 because of using Farsi, Victor and his wife Shamiram began to hold Christian meetings in their own home. Pray that all charges against Pastor Victor, his family and church members will be dropped.

FRIDAY 9 The small church in Turkey was concerned by a statement signed on 31 July by 18 senior Christian and Jewish leaders affirming that they practise their faiths freely and that “statements alleging and/or alluding to oppression are completely untrue”. Although some Christian groups benefit from Turkish government policies, others suffer many kinds of harassment and injustice. “I completely disagree with this statement ... they need to visit Mardin. Here, our property is being seized. The government may not target us individually, but seizing assets from our foundations still imposes great pressure on us,” said a Christian from south-east Turkey. Pray for true freedom and equality for all Christians in Turkey.

SATURDAY 10 “They reduced us and minimised us until we became a minority. This is a hurtful term. We are still experiencing the trauma of 1915 because this genocide effaced us from the land that we inhabited. Now we are subjected to tolerance ... What that words actually says is ‘You are minor,

and we are doing you a kindness.” A Christian leader from Mardin, Turkey, explained the situation of the Christian community in Turkey who (as in classical Islam) are treated as inferior to the Muslim majority, their continued presence tolerated as a favour, not a right. Humanly speaking, the situation of the tiny Christian community in Turkey looks likely to get worse under Turkish President Erdogan, especially as they may be blamed for the words and actions of US President Trump. But nothing is impossible for the Lord, so pray for an improvement in the situation of Turkey’s Christians.

SUNDAY 11 **O God, who can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, please teach us how to love each other, especially our brothers and sisters who suffer for Christ. Strengthen us through Your Spirit in our inner being and so that we may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge and conquers all, the love He has commanded us, the love that astonishes the unbelievers and the persecutors. Beloved Jesus, teach us, fill us, so all may see that we are Yours, O King of love. (Ephesians 3:16-20; John 13:34-35)**

MONDAY 12 Yondo is an initiation rite practised by followers of traditional African religions in southern Chad. Every few years, men and boys are rounded up and forced to undergo the secret initiation, which is so brutal that some of them die. It is especially forced on Christians and more educated/Westernised individuals who, it is felt, have wandered too far from Chad’s traditional culture. In the 1970s 13 pastors were buried alive because

they refused to accept that Christians should be initiated. 2018 was a Yondo year, and many prayer requests came out of Chad in August for hundreds of Christian young men and boys fleeing from villages into the town of Sarh to take refuge in the churches, trying to avoid being snatched for initiation. Those who survive Yondo may be physically damaged for life, and certainly will be adversely affected spiritually because the rites involve ancestor and demon worship. Pray for all who have experienced the 2018 Yondo, asking especially for our Christian brothers that the Lord Jesus Christ will heal them in every way.

TUESDAY 13 Pastor Adamu, his wife and their three children were burnt to death when ethnic Fulani herdsmen set fire to their house on 28 August. At least three other people died, 95 houses and many churches were burnt, 310 cattle were stolen and fields of maize were destroyed during the attack in Barkin Ladi county, Plateau State, Nigeria. Ask that the survivors may have grace from God to forgive their attackers and that He will provide for their practical needs, as so many have lost their livelihoods.

WEDNESDAY 14 Christians are in danger of being forced underground or disappearing altogether in Plateau State in Nigeria's Middle Belt, says a Nigerian church leader. As Fulani herdsmen continue to attack and kill Christians with apparent impunity, Pastor Bayo Famonure stated his belief that they have the intention of "conquering and colonising" Plateau state, subjugating or killing the Christians and taking their land. The

leadership and educated elite of the Fulani ethnic group, living in towns and cities, are Muslim, although many of the uneducated nomadic Fulani herdsmen follow traditional African religions. Pray that all Fulani people will act towards Christians with justice and righteousness and that the Prince of Peace will bring an end to their hostility and violence towards His people.



This little boy was found lying on top of his parents' dead bodies after a Fulani attack. Too young to talk when rescued, he was given the name "Miracle" by the Christian couple who now care for him

THURSDAY 15 "If we want to get married, there are no girls left," said Nabil, a Christian man living with his 65-year-old mother in north-east Syria. No one else lives in their village now. Some 10,000 Christians used to inhabit 35 villages along the Khabor River, but most fled during the war, especially after the kidnapping of over 200 Christians by Islamic State terrorists in February-March 2015. "Just keep the evil people away from us," says Nabil's mother, recalling her days of captivity, "We don't ask

anything else from God.” Pray for these traumatised, impoverished and scattered Christian communities that the Lord will restore them, physically, mentally and emotionally, and bring them back to their homes to continue the Christian presence and witness.

FRIDAY 16 Kurdish militia closed down four Christian schools in north-east Syria on 28 August, just before the new school year began, because the schools had refused to teach the local Kurdish administration’s new curriculum. The schools wanted to continue with their longstanding curriculum, approved by the central Syrian government, which includes history lessons that teach about the violence Christians have suffered in the region e.g. the genocide that peaked in 1915 (when Kurds did a lot of the killing). The education of thousands of Christian children is affected by this action, which is the latest of many incidents of Kurdish harassment of Christians. Pray that a solution will be quickly found, allowing the Christian youngsters to gain accepted qualifications, study their own history and languages, and grow in their faith.

SATURDAY 17 “For years I have been saying that the Kurds are trying to eliminate the Christian presence in this part of Syria,” said a senior church leader in the north-east of the country. Many Christians have fled, but others are determined to stay. After the closure of the four schools (see above), church ministers led a crowd of local Christian protestors, who carried Syrian flags and chanted, “We will remain Assyrians [i.e. Christians] and die in this land.” Praise God for

their faith, courage and determined Christian witness.

SUNDAY 18 O Lord Most High, we lift to You the situation in Syria, asking that You will bring about a final end to its long-running war. Please guide the international community to work for a lasting and just peace that will allow the Christians who remain in Syria to live in safety and security. Bring comfort and consolation to all those who have lost family, friends, homes and livelihoods. As they remember that You are their portion and their treasure is in heaven. May our brothers and sisters find refuge under Your wings and know Your faithfulness as their shield. (Psalm 91:4)

MONDAY 19 Nine civilians in the Christian-majority town of Mhardeh, near Hama in Syria, died on 7 September when shells or rockets from a rebel-controlled region hit built-up areas. Throughout the Syrian civil war, Christian civilian areas in Syria have been deliberately targeted with rocket attacks and shelling by jihadist rebel groups, although these attacks have gone largely unreported by Western media. Pray for all who mourn, whether for those killed on 7 September or for those in earlier incidents in the war, that they will be comforted. (Matthew 5:4)

TUESDAY 20 Thank the Lord for answered prayer, as there are signs of improvement in the UK Home Office’s stance on Syrian Christian refugees. Although Christians were about 10% of the Syrian population before the Syrian civil war, and were singled out for attack by jihadist rebel

groups during the war, they have been woefully underrepresented amongst Syrians given permission to resettle in the UK. At the moment less than 1% of Syrians resettled in the UK are Christians. No Christians at all were allowed to resettle in the first quarter of 2018, but in the second quarter there were ten. This compares with eleven Christians in the whole of 2017. As the year draws to a close, pray that Home Office decision-makers will recognise that there are many Syrian Christians who are refugees in the region and will act with justice, giving some safe refuge in the UK.

WEDNESDAY 21 Authorities in Thailand rounded up and detained 181 refugees from ethnic minorities on 28 August. The majority were Montagnards from Vietnam, many of whom were understood to be Christians. At least 50 were children. Most of those detained have official refugee status from the UNHCR, but Thai authorities have a track record of refusing to recognise the status of refugees, so it is likely the Montagnards will be deported back to Vietnam. In Vietnam the Montagnard Christians face intimidation and arbitrary detention as well as often being prevented by the authorities from meeting to worship. Many have sought asylum in neighbouring Thailand and Cambodia to escape persecution. Ask that Thai authorities will have compassion on those seeking refuge in Thailand and will heed Scripture's warning against those who withhold justice from foreigners (Deuteronomy 27:19).

THURSDAY 22 Pray today for persecuted Christians around the world, with

these words written by a Vietnamese Christian: "We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters who are severely oppressed. May our Jesus Christ console and strengthen them. May they always recognise that He is with them, and may His Word, 'Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest,' resonate with them." (Matthew 11:28)

FRIDAY 23 Muslims in the Egyptian village of Sultan Basha uprooted the crops of Christian villagers on 24 August and damaged their irrigation pumps. This violence reportedly came after police had caught three Muslims who had damaged CCTV cameras on the wall and gate of the village church. In the previous month, Muslim villagers had held three days of demonstrations against the granting of legal status to the church building, which has been used for about eight years for Christian worship meetings. There are around 400 Christians in Sultan Basha. Pray that Muslims throughout Egypt will be willing for Christians to have legal places to gather for worship.

SATURDAY 24 As of September there were a total of 3,510 Egyptian church building licence applications that were still waiting for official approval. Only 220 applications had been granted in almost two years since the committee set up to deal with the application first met. Before 2016 it was extremely difficult to get official permission to use a building for Christian worship, but President al-Sisi was determined to change that. Yet the authorities are very slow and at a local level there are repeated incidents of violent

opposition to the licensing of church buildings. Please continue to pray for a complete change in attitudes amongst the Muslim majority in Egypt, so that from top to bottom of society they will be content for Christians to have sufficient places of worship.

SUNDAY 25 Lord Jesus Christ, we pray today for the Christian girls and young women of Egypt who have been abducted and forced into marriage with Muslim men against their will. Lord, we pray that You will protect our sisters, cut off from all those they know and love, forced to sign statements that they have converted to Islam, and perhaps badly treated and abused in the household where they now live. May they lean on You for comfort and strength. Please bring them safely back to their own families. (Matthew 18:10)

MONDAY 26 Christians in the Egyptian village of Dimshau Hashim in Minya governorate, had to hold a funeral service in the street, after the Christian home where they used to meet was attacked, vandalised and looted by Muslim extremists after Friday prayers on 31 August. (There is no church building in the village.) Three other Christian homes were also targeted, and two Christians suffered knife wounds to the head and face. Ask the Lord to comfort them in their distress. Police arrested 38 Muslims but released half of them very quickly. A local Christian leader exhorted the Christians to forgive but also called for the culprits to be brought to justice, to avoid the impression that attacks on Christians will not be punished.

TUESDAY 27 Buddhist mobs forced the closure of multiple church services across Sri Lanka in July, threatening ministers and congregations with violence. Some mobs included Buddhist monks or public officials. Pray that our brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka will not be fearful, but have confidence that the Lord as their light, salvation and stronghold (Psalm 27:1-3).



Christians are 8% of Sri Lanka's population

WEDNESDAY 28 Christians in Pakistan were greatly encouraged when General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of the Army Staff, hosted a dinner in honour of senior Church leaders in August. He praised the contribution of Pakistani Christians to the nation, especially in education and healthcare, as well as the outstanding role played by a number of Christians in the military defence of Pakistan. This gesture means so much to a Christian community who are greatly despised by the Muslim majority. Pray that the General's positive attitude may trickle down to all levels of society.

THURSDAY 29 A Christian family of five, living in Karachi, Pakistan,

have been violently attacked by local Muslims wanting them to leave the neighbourhood. In an attack on 18 September, John Elvin, who works as a nurse, and his two sons, Sunil and Vikram, were severely beaten up. All required hospital treatment and Vikram was permanently blinded in one eye. The family had been threatened with death if they did not move, and were planning to go about two months later when their one-year tenancy agreement expired. Pray for an end to the anti-Christian violence which has developed in Pakistan in recent years, and that John and his family will be kept safe.

FRIDAY 30 Please pray for Imran Khan, the former cricket star who is now Prime Minister of Pakistan (1 Timothy 2:2). He has announced that he wants to follow the legacy of Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, whose vision was for all citizens to be equal. Pakistani Christians, who are despised and discriminated against, feel greatly encouraged by this pledge. Many Muslims will be opposed to Imran Khan's aim on theological grounds, because classical Islam says that Muslims should have more rights than non-Muslims, who must be subjugated in an Islamic State. Pray that Imran Khan will be able to achieve his aim.

December

SATURDAY 1 Christians in Bangladesh make up about 1% of the population, with Hindus 9% and Muslims 90%. The constitution gives religious minorities the right not only to

practise their faith but also to share it, so the Christians have greater religious freedom than believers in many other Muslim-majority contexts. But there is pressure for greater Islamisation, and Christians face discrimination and sometimes violence. Many of them are very poor. Pray that they will rejoice in the Lord always and make the most of every opportunity they have to share with others the Gospel message.

SUNDAY 2 O Lord Jesus, we thank You for the faith and courage You have given to Christians in Afghanistan, who follow You despite the possibility of being executed for apostasy from Islam. While we do not even know the numbers, You know each one by name. Help them to abide in You, day by day and moment by moment. Lead them to other brothers and sisters so that they can have fellowship together, speak of You whom they love, and teach each other what Your Spirit has revealed. May Christianity thrive again in Afghanistan as it did many centuries ago.

MONDAY 3 Terrible floods afflicted the south Indian state of Kerala in August, the worst for almost



Barnabas Fund assisted Christians affected by the floods in Kerala

a century. This state has a large Christian minority and Indian Christians report that some Hindus in Kerala blamed the Christians for the floods, which they saw as divine punishment. They reasoned that the Christians had been eating beef and thus brought down on Kerala the wrath of the Hindu gods, as cows are sacred in Hinduism. Pray that the love and lives of the Christians in Kerala may bring glory to Christ despite such accusations (1 Peter 2:12).

TUESDAY 4 Two-thirds of Kuwait's population is comprised of migrant workers, who are very vulnerable to abuse, forced labour and deportation for minor errors. Domestic workers are the most vulnerable of all. There are thought to be up to three-quarters of a million Christians amongst the migrant workers, most of them Indians from Kerala. Please pray for all migrant workers in Kuwait that they will be treated kindly and justly by their Muslim Kuwaiti employers. Ask that our brothers and sisters will find strength, hope and joy in the Lord.

WEDNESDAY 5 Uniquely among Gulf states, Kuwait has Christian citizens, who number about 250. Some are originally from Iraq and Turkey and their families have lived in Kuwait for about a century, but the majority are Palestinians or from other parts of the Levant who came in the 1950s and 1960s. A law passed in 1981 forbids the naturalisation of non-Muslims as Kuwaiti citizens but male Christian citizens can still transmit their citizenship to their children. Praise God for these Christian families and ask that He will guide them to use

their unusual position to bring glory to the Lord. There are also Christian converts from Islam, but only the Lord knows how many - pray for their protection and encouragement.

THURSDAY 6 Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince has advanced the cause of women's rights in the strictly Islamic kingdom. They can now learn to fly and drive, and go to football matches. He has also affirmed that there is no law compelling them to cover their faces in public, and women staged a protest in September posting photos and videos of themselves showing their faces and even their hair. But there does not seem to be any change in the extreme restrictions on Christians and other non-Muslims. Pray that they may be allowed to show their faith visibly.

FRIDAY 7 Armed men raided a church in Alchevsk, eastern Ukraine, on 6 August and detained a number of the leaders for several hours, ordering them to appear later in court. The men, thought to be from the security ministry of the self-proclaimed Lugansk People's Republic (LPR), interrupted a service and forced the congregation to lie face down on the floor. They then seized the church computer. According to a February 2018 ruling, all religious associations in the LPR had to register by the end of August. The previous month, a group of evangelical churches had been banned from all activity because they were considered an "extremist religious organisation". Pray for full religious liberty in LPR which was formed in 2014 as a result of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

SATURDAY 8 “I was praying and asking God that we do not get cold in winter and that we have fuel. At the time of prayer, the phone rang and I complained, thinking who could it be that was calling to stop me from concentrating on my prayer.” Hasmik, from a large and very poor Christian family in Armenia, continued to pray, but the phone continued to ring. Eventually, rather annoyed, she stopped praying and picked up the phone. It was her local church inviting her to go and get fuel, donated by Barnabas Fund. “I cried for joy,” says Hasmik, “and apologised to God that I lacked faith and did not expect such a quick response.” The Armenian winter (December to April) can be bitterly cold. Pray that food and fuel provided by Barnabas Fund to believers in some of the poorest parts of the country will bring spiritual encouragement as well as meeting physical needs.

SUNDAY 9 **O Lord Jesus, we bring to You our brothers and sisters in Tajikistan, remembering especially the children of Christian parents, who are forbidden by law from going to church or taking part in any public Christian activities. Please keep these little ones from falling away. Guide their parents and pastors as to how to build them up in their faith. Touch the hearts of those who passed this law to try to hinder the children from coming to You. May they themselves have a personal and life-changing encounter with You.**

MONDAY 10 Pray for courageous moderates who speak out against extremists of their own religion, trying to bring peace, reason and tolerance to tense and hate-filled situations.

They put their own lives in danger by doing this, even as they try to protect Christians and other minorities. Ask that not only would they be kept physically safe but also that they would come to know the joy of a personal relationship with the God who is love, in whose image they were made.

TUESDAY 11 Uganda has been a strongly Christian country, but Islam is making rapid advances. In July there were elections for village leaders across the country, and Muslims were instructed to try to get into those positions and to vote only for Muslims. As a result, Muslims now control many more communities than before and “persecution of the Church increases” reports a Ugandan church leader. Islamic finance is also well established in Ugandan banks, thus giving sharia (Islamic law) a foothold. Pray that church leaders and Christian politicians will be alert and active to safeguard the Christian heritage of Uganda.

WEDNESDAY 12 Many Muslims are turning to Christ in Uganda, including imams of mosques, and are often thrown out by their families as a result. Ask the Lord to comfort and provide for each one, and also to guide the Christian ministries which care for and disciple them. Pray also for protection of those who seek to raise awareness of the challenge that Islam is posing to Uganda. There was an attempted poisoning of one courageous Christian just four days after he had been able to speak to President Museveni on the subject. “God himself rescued me from this attack by seeing before I could take the poisoned drink,” he wrote to Barnabas Fund.

THURSDAY 13 “I was waiting for my day to die because of hunger. Thanks to God, I can now live for more days. May the God of mercy bless whoever has come to my rescue!!!” These were the words of James, a blind Christian from South Sudan, now living as a refugee in Uganda, when food from Barnabas Fund’s Project Joseph reached him. Thank the Lord with us for generous supporters who make it possible for us to feed our hungry brothers and sisters in East Africa and elsewhere.

FRIDAY 14 Three church buildings were ransacked and a fourth set on fire on 4 August in Jijiga, eastern Ethiopia. The perpetrators were young Muslim men, supporters of the regional president, who were reacting against the presence of Ethiopian central government troops in their city, the capital of a semi-autonomous and strong Muslim and ethnic Somali region of Ethiopia. According to reports the rioters also attacked the homes of some non-Somali and mainly-Christian ethnic groups. Pray for the protection of the Christian minority in this part of Ethiopia.

SATURDAY 15 On 14 September, terrorists from Somali-based Al Shabaab flagged down a bus travelling in north-eastern Kenya and ordered everyone to show their identity cards. They separated out three non-local (therefore assumed to be non-Muslim) passengers and asked them to recite verses from the Quran and say the *shahada* (Islamic creed). Speaking the words of the *shahada* is considered by Muslims to be conversion to Islam. A boy called Joshua, who assisted the driver, and a labourer from Masalani,

refused to do so, and were killed by the terrorists. Praise God for the word of their testimony and that they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death (Revelation 12:11). Pray that this may comfort their grieving families and challenge their murderers and those who saw them die.

SUNDAY 16 **Heavenly Father, we pray for Christians in Somalia, whose lives are at risk every day because they have left Islam to follow Your Son, Jesus Christ. Please keep them safe from those who plan and work to kill them all. May they rejoice in Your Word that tells us how You laugh at those who conspire and plot against Your will. May they be strengthened and comforted by the Holy Spirit, may their faith overcome all fear, and may they rest in the peace promised by Christ Himself, in whose Name we pray. (Psalm 2:1-3)**

MONDAY 17 On 9 September Chinese authorities forcibly closed one of the largest unofficial churches in the capital, Beijing. The church had operated for years with relative freedom, but began to come under growing pressure in April when its leaders refused to allow the authorities to install CCTV cameras inside the building. A total of around 1,500 Christians used to attend the various services each week. Pray that they will continue to hold unwaveringly to their Christian hope, and may find ways to continue meeting together to grow in faith and encourage one another in their Christian walk (Hebrews 10:23-25).

TUESDAY 18 A landmark event in the history of the Church in China occurred on 12 September when



Chinese Christians who are part of unofficial churches have come under increased pressure from authorities since February, when new religion regulations were introduced

279 Chinese pastors bravely issued a public declaration calling on the government to allow full religious freedom. This was a response to the growing persecution of Christians in China. The declaration concludes, “For the sake of the gospel, we are prepared to bear all losses – even the loss of our freedom and of our lives.” Pray that whatever happens in China, God’s people will stand firm and not compromise or deny Christ.

WEDNESDAY 19 North Korea has a system of social classification called *songbun*, established by the country’s founder, Kim Il Sung, some 60 years ago. It has been expanded to five main groups: special, nucleus (core), basic (wavering), complex and hostile. Where you can live or study, what job you can do, and even what food you can eat are controlled by your *songbun*. An individual’s *songbun* depends mainly on what their paternal ancestors did in the first half of the

twentieth century during the Japanese colonial period and the Korean War. Perceived disloyalty during that time is punished with low *songbun*. So too is perceived disloyalty now. Christians are therefore classed as hostile and suffer greatly as a result. Pray for our North Korean brothers and sisters that, as they consider Jesus, who endured such opposition from sinners, they will not grow weary or lose heart. (Hebrews 12:3)

THURSDAY 20 On Sunday there will be long-delayed elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for president, national assembly and at provincial level. The current president, Joseph Kabila, has found himself in direct conflict with church leaders who have been urging him to end his extended presidency (almost 18 years) and stand aside. DRC is wracked by violence, much of it coming from the Allied Democratic Forces, who are an Islamist group. At the time of writing there is also a serious outbreak of Ebola, which may cause the scheduled election date to be postponed. Ask that the Lord’s hand will be over DRC, to bring an end to the decades of violence and establish the president and legislators of His choice.

FRIDAY 21 Last year (2017) was not an easy one for Christians in Nepal, but one encouragement was that Christmas was declared a national holiday. This year (2018) has been even harder, as September saw the introduction of a new law forbidding any attempts to convert a Hindu or Buddhist. The law is so vaguely worded that almost any public

Christian activity is potentially illegal, e.g. prayer, worship, mentioning the Christian faith. As Christmas approaches, ask for the Lord to send His angels to watch over His people and keep them safe as they celebrate their Saviour's birth together.

SATURDAY 22 The new law in Nepal (see above) appears to apply outside the country as well as inside. So a Nepali Christian (or, in theory, anyone at all) could be arrested in Nepal for having witnessed to Nepali Hindus or Buddhists in another country. "Christians are now, in effect, *de facto* criminals," said one Nepali church leader to Barnabas Fund. Pray that Nepali Christians may be inspired by the example of the apostles Peter and John, and boldly obey God rather than human laws which ban Christian witness. (Acts 4:18-20)

SUNDAY 23 **Heavenly Father, we lift to You our brothers and sisters who love and follow Your Son Jesus Christ in parts of the world where they are despised and discriminated against. We ask that You will fill them with joy as they prepare to celebrate the birth of our Saviour. Protect them from danger at this season of the year, when extremists often plan attacks against Your people, because it is a time of special importance to Christians. We ask You to overrule, to change the minds of those who are preparing violence, and to shield Your faithful people from all harm. In Jesus' Name we pray.**

MONDAY 24 On Christmas Eve 2017, British street preacher Roland Parsons stood outside Victoria Station

in London and read aloud from the Gospel of Luke about the birth of Christ. He had done this every Christmas Eve for over 20 years, without interference. But in 2017 a policeman told Roland that he was not allowed to do so, and must show his passport in order to continue reading. As religious liberty in the UK comes under increasing pressure, pray that this trend may be reversed and traditional freedoms be restored and affirmed. Pray that Roland will be able to read the Bible freely on Christmas Eve this year.

TUESDAY 25 As we rejoice in the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, pray for millions of Christians who live today and every day with discrimination, injustice and the threat of violence. Pray that, as they celebrate the coming of the Prince of Peace, who will reign with justice and righteousness, they may know His peace, hope and joy overflowing in their lives. Lift up to the Lord especially those who are celebrating Christmas for the first time since loved ones have been martyred. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

WEDNESDAY 26 Thank the Lord today for the faithful witness of countless believers who have laid down their lives for Christ in the last year. Only the Lord Himself knows the true number. Pray that their grieving families and friends may be comforted by the assurance that their loved ones are honoured in heaven for their martyrdom. Ask that we may see on earth a great harvest from the "grains of wheat" that have fallen to the ground. (John 12:24)

THURSDAY 27 The Christian population of Iraq has dwindled from 1.5 million to an estimated 250,000. They became increasingly unpopular as American forces attacked Iraq in 1990–91 and again in 2003. Then came Islamic State terrorists, making no secret of their desire to force Christians out. Many Christians found a relatively safe refuge in the Kurdish-ruled part of Iraq, but reports are now coming of threats and intimidation of Christians as the Kurdish authorities push for greater “Kurdification” of the area they govern. Pray that Iraqi Kurdistan will be a safe sanctuary for persecuted Iraqi Christians and that they will be treated as fully equal with the Kurdish Muslim majority.

FRIDAY 28 Scotland’s government has decided to abolish the country’s ancient blasphemy law. Dating from 1690, this law protected the beliefs of the Presbyterian Church only. But at the same time the Scottish authorities are allowing what is in effect a new blasphemy law to develop, as activists use hate crime laws to get peaceful Christian street preachers arrested. It does not seem to matter how respectfully the preachers express their views e.g. disagreement with “politically correct” LGBT beliefs – they are still arrested. An independent review this year of hate crime laws in Scotland has done nothing to rectify the situation. Pray for full freedom of speech for all in Scotland.

SATURDAY 29 Barnabas Fund’s petition for “Our Religious Freedom” closes at the end of December.

OurReligiousFreedom.org. At the time of writing, over 85,000 signatures have been gathered in UK, Australia and New Zealand. Pray that legislators and opinion-formers in these countries will understand the need to protect freedoms that have been painfully won over many centuries and will act to ensure they are not eroded by the growth of secular humanism.

SUNDAY 30 **Dear Lord, we ask today for Your blessing on Christians in Turkmenistan, who live under such pressure and are so cut off from fellowship with believers elsewhere. We ask that You will grant them favour with the authorities, so that they can have permission to import Bibles and to register their churches so that they can function legally. May Your people be seen as a positive and welcome part of society in this isolated and closed country, whose people are taught to virtually worship their president. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ.**

MONDAY 31 Many people in the non-Western world think that the Western New Year is a Christian festival, so it is often a time of increased harassment and violence against Christian minorities. Pray for the protection of our brothers and sisters at this time, Pray especially for converts from other religions, who are very vulnerable to loneliness as well as persecution, that in the coming year they will be comforted in the knowledge that the Good Shepherd carries His flock close to His heart (Isaiah 40:11).



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UK

9 Priory Row, Coventry CV1 5EX

Telephone 024 7623 1923

Fax 024 7683 4718

From outside the UK

Telephone +44 24 7623 1923

Fax +44 24 7683 4718

Email info@barnabasfund.org

Registered charity number 1092935

Company registered in England

number 4029536

For a list of all trustees, please
contact Barnabas Fund UK at the
Coventry address above.

Australia

PO BOX 3527,

LOGANHOLME, QLD 4129

Telephone (07) 3806 1076

or 1300 365 799

Fax (07) 3806 4076

Email bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org

Germany

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Stuttgart

IBAN: DE89520604100000415600

BIC: GENODEF1EK1

USA

6731 Curran St, McLean, VA 22101

Telephone (703) 288-1681

or toll-free 1-866-936-2525

Fax (703) 288-1682

Email usa@barnabasaid.org

New Zealand

PO Box 276018, Manukau City,
Auckland, 2241

Telephone (09) 280 4385

or 0800 008 805

Email office@barnabasfund.org.nz

Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland

PO Box 354, Bangor, BT20 9EQ

Telephone 028 91 455 246

or 07875 539003

Email ireland@barnabasfund.org

Singapore

Cheques in Singapore dollars payable
to "Olive Aid Trust" may be sent to:
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P.O. Box 03124, Subang Jaya, 47507
Selangor, MALAYSIA

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Account Number: 140-901-654-0

South Africa

Office 301, 3rd Floor, Eikestad mall, 43
Andringa Street, Stellenbosch 7599

Telephone +27 21 808 1668

Email bfsa@barnabasfund.org

International Headquarters

The Old Rectory,
River Street, Pewsey,
Wiltshire SN9 5DB, UK

Telephone 01672 564938

Fax 01672 565030

From outside UK:

Telephone +44 1672 564938

Fax +44 1672 565030

Email info@barnabasfund.org

**Front Cover: On our 25th anniversary Barnabas Fund is thankful to God and
our supporters. "For He has done marvellous things!" (Psalm 98:1, ESV).**