



**ST ANDREW'S/ST JOHN'S
PRAYER MONTH
JUNE 2017**

FROM OPEN DOORS WORLD WATCH LIST 2017

“Each year, Open Doors publishes the World Watch List to highlight the plight of persecuted Christians around the world. The list represents believers in Jesus Christ who are arrested, harassed, tortured — even killed — for their faith.”

In 2017 St Andrew's/ St John's will join Open Doors invitation to pray for Persecuted Christians and in obedience to Jesus' command to us in Matthew 5:44 to pray also for those who are persecuting them because they are persecuting Christ (whatever you do to a person in Christ, you do also to Him). At His dying moments, Jesus asked the Father to forgive them because they didn't understand what they were doing.

SUNDAY 4TH JUNE

North Korea

“Leader: Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un

Population: 25,405,000 (300,000 Christians)

Main Religion: Atheism/traditional beliefs

Government: Dictatorial paranoia

Source of Persecution: Communist oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia

The Worst Place on Earth for Christians

For the sixteenth consecutive year, North Korea is ranked as the most oppressive place in the world for Christians, #1 on the World Watch List. In this totalitarian communist state, Christians are forced to hide their faith completely from government authorities, neighbours and often, even their own spouses and children. Due to ever-present surveillance, many pray with eyes open, and gathering for praise or fellowship is practically impossible. Worship of the ruling Kim family is mandated for all citizens, and those who don't comply (including Christians) are arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed. Entire Christian families are imprisoned in hard labour camps, where unknown numbers die each year from torture, beatings, overexertion and starvation. Those who attempt to flee to South Korea through China risk execution or life imprisonment, and those who stay behind often fare no better.

Through local partners, Open Doors is serving Christians in North Korea by providing them with emergency relief aid, including food, medicine and clothes, as well as Bibles, books and other discipleship materials.

Open Doors partners in China also provide shelter and aid for Christians who have fled the country, as well as training for those who wish to return to North Korea for ministry.



Hea Woo's Story – Testifying in Prison

As Hea Woo looked into her husband's cell, she couldn't believe her eyes. The man before her was hardly recognizable from the torture, but she knew it was him. He covertly slipped something into her hand that would change her life forever: his profession of faith. Later, she began to follow Christ and ended up in a cell of her own. Despite being faced with starvation and torture, Hea Woo realized that she had been given an opportunity to share the gospel with those around her. Before long, a number of women in the camp had placed their faith in Christ, and secret gatherings for fellowship began — in the

outhouse. In this, the most unlikely of places, the women silently sang songs of praise, prayed and shared the Bible verses they knew with one another. Amazingly, she was later released from prison, and managed to flee to South Korea.

Her testimony is representative of the many North Korean Christians who suffer and die in prison camps each year, and serves as a reminder of God's power and faithfulness.”

How We Can Pray

“Pray for North Korean believers who are languishing in prison camps, and for the proclamation of the gospel both in and outside the prison walls. Also, pray that Christians in the country would have access to Bibles and fellowship.”

Pray for the guards and officials who are indoctrinated or fear-filled to carry out these tortures – that they might see in the Christians, as Jews saw in Stephen at the time of his torture and execution, the shining glory of Jesus.

Pray for the government that these hate-filled and pride inspired laws might change

Pray for Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un that God will soften his heart and that the Holy Spirit will move in North Korea to bring peace and harmony into that society and respect and care for the world.

Pray for world leaders that their response to the current rhetoric will be wise and God inspired.

Pray for Hea Woo and her husband with thanks for their faith and the witness that they are to us as well as to the people they have led to Christ. We live in a country that does not put us in prison for our faith, still many times we miss opportunities to witness to Your goodness to us. Forgive us Father for missed opportunities and by the strength of Your Holy Spirit give us boldness for You in our city.

We pray for ourselves that we will, like Hea Woo, be bold to be light and salt to our world.

Father lead us to the new minister You have picked for us and hold us together, united in faith for Jesus' name sake.

SUNDAY 11TH JUNE SOMALIA

“Leader: President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud

Population: 11,392,000 (*hundreds of Christians*)

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Federal Republic

Source of Persecution: Islamic Extremism, Ethnic Antagonism

Where Martyrdom is Commonplace

Somalia has been on the World Watch List since 1993. Islam was already firmly established in Somalia before the arrival of Christianity, and as a result, life for believers is defined by hostility. Somalia’s tribal system — as an informal way of governing Somalia — is very resistant to modern government models, including democracy, which means that Christians have absolutely no voice in society. Since the downfall of Ziad Barre in 1991, Somalia has become a safe haven for Islamic militants.

Christian converts from Islam in the country have been facing a great deal of persecution, and martyrdom is very common. The mere suspicion of one’s having renounced Islam leads to a rushed public execution.

To aid believers in Somalia, Open Doors works through local partners, providing underground Christians with discipleship training, Bibles and Christian books, along with community development programs and more, helping these believers to survive on the outskirts of society.



Mohammed’s Story - No Other Option

“You are a kaffir (infidel)! You will die!” When Mohammed heard the accusation, he already knew what his friend Ahmed had found: his Bible. To Ahmed, his friend’s decision to follow Christ was deserving of death. Three nights after the discovery of the Bible, Ahmed attacked Mohammed with a knife. “I saw nothing, just felt the sudden sharp pain to my head and felt the blood streaming down my neck,” Mohammed says. By the grace of God, neighbours came to his aid. Ahmed ran away and Mohammed was taken to hospital. “Ahmed was my friend, someone I’ve known for a long time. I housed him when he had nowhere to go, and in return, I got this. It is very painful.” But as hard as this has been, Mohammed has not given up his faith. “It is the only place where I have ever had inner peace.

Despite the isolation and persecution, I am at peace. This is why I hold on to Christ. Going back to Islam is not an option.”

AL-SHABAAB, AN ISLAMIC MILITANT GROUP BASED IN SOMALIA, HAS ALSO CARRIED OUT ATTACKS IN KENYA,

ETHIOPIA, DJIBOUTI AND UGANDA, OFTEN TARGETING CHRISTIANS.”

How We Can Pray

“Pray for Christians in Somalia who risk martyrdom if their faith is discovered and struggle with keeping it to themselves. Pray that they would have wisdom and discernment in sharing the gospel with others, along with a quiet boldness and sense of God’s presence with them.”

Pray for those who give in to the temptation to use religion as a means of acting out violence and atrocities against others. Lead them and us not into temptation, but deliver us all from the evil one. When there is a lack of understanding of the scripture, please let resulting actions not be against your will and send teachers to clearly explain Your truth. We have seen that Your people, Isreal, twisted Your message to the point where even Jesus, the Messiah they were looking for, wasn’t understood.

It is easy to be deceived when we do not take the time to study Your words by the grace of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Thank You for the example of Mohammed, who despite his torture, he has found such peace in You that the fear of more torture cannot take away His peace.

Father please allow us to seek Your peace through Your grace and may all our fears be dissipated by the greater power of the knowledge of Your love.

May we seek Your leading in finding our new minister without fear in the true knowledge that You have this already in hand and that Your plans are always for our good. Give us please peace and patience in that knowledge. In Jesus name we ask.

SUNDAY 18TH JUNE AFGHANISTAN

Leader: President Ashraf Ghani

Population: 34,169,000 (*thousands of Christians*)

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic

Source of Persecution: Islamic Oppression, Organized Corruption and Crime

When It Costs Everything to Follow Christ

Christians in Afghanistan experience extreme persecution. Severe pressure on believers, resulting from Islamic oppression, is exerted mostly by families, friends and community, but also by local religious leaders. The state authorities are weak, and Islam is viewed as a welcome unifying factor, especially as society agrees that conversion away from Islam cannot be tolerated. Many who convert from Islam to Christianity are murdered once their extended families learn of their new faith. In other families, Christian converts are delivered to mental hospitals under the premise that no one in their right mind would ever choose to leave Islam. In any case, converts usually lose their rights to personal property and possessions, effectively leaving them destitute. This can occur even upon the mere suspicion of conversion — a fear tactic that leads family members to react all the more harshly in curbing even the slightest hints of interest in Christianity. To help persecuted Christians in Afghanistan, Open Doors provides emergency aid, counselling, literacy training, radio programs, vocational projects, biblical and pastoral training courses and more.



Miracles

Saif desired to share what God's Word had miraculously done in his family. Unable to tell anyone else, he called the follow-up team from the Christian radio: "One of my seven children was disabled and could not walk. When I brought the New Testament into my house, she started to move. I began to read from the Bible, and she started to walk!" After Saif finished his story, they prayed together. After a few days, he called again. "People in my village want to know how my daughter was healed. What do I tell them?" "Miracles happen to the glory of God," the counsellor said. "Share about your experience with Jesus." Saif didn't contact the radio counsellor anymore. They contacted his wife, who explained that he had been kidnapped. Unexpectedly, the radio counsellors received a call from Saif

soon after. After being abducted by extremists, he had been able to escape! While he and his wife now live without a church or small group, they do have fellowship: the fellowship of the radio."

How We Can Pray

“Pray for believers in Afghanistan who lack fellowship, especially new converts who fear telling anyone about their faith in Christ. Also, pray for those who lose worldly possessions to persecution when they gain eternal life. Pray that they would be able to forgive their persecutors to the glory of God.”

Father thank You for the witness Saif is to us.

Thank you for the blessings we have in this country. Blessings of stable government still held accountable to the people. Thank you that we can worship in fellowship together without fear of losing our homes, our livelihoods and our freedoms.

We remember Your exhortation to the Israelites in Deut 30:15 – 20 to follow Your commands and to love You and this comes with a promise “...I have set life and death, blessing and curse, before you. Therefore choose life so that you and your descendants may live”. When the Israelites forgot God and allowed the lure of other gods to turn their heads, God could no longer look on them.

Thank you for the blessings we have of so many comforts. Remind not to forget you in what we have; may we never forget that all good things come from you and to share with others less fortunate. Forgive us when we allow those “things” to become our gods. We dedicate ourselves to you and to stewardship of all that you have given to us. In Jesus name and for God’s glory

SUNDAY 25TH JUNE PAKISTAN

“Leader: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif

Population: 196,744,000 (3,938,000 *Christians*)

Main Religion: Islam

Government: Republic

Source of Persecution: Islamic Oppression, Organized Corruption

Unjust Treatment, Violent Attacks

There are multiple groups of Christians experiencing persecution in Pakistan. Historical Christian communities exist openly, but have to put up with stringent rules and constant monitoring, while Christian converts from Islam suffer the brunt of persecution from both radical Islamic groups and families and neighbours. Protestant Christian communities are under close scrutiny and suffer frequent attacks, especially when they are active in outreach amongst Muslims.

Violent persecution is common. Christians are targets for murder, bombings, abduction of women, rape, forced marriages and eviction from home and country. Unjust and arbitrary blasphemy laws are used to punish Christians and prevent evangelism.

Through local partners in Pakistan, Open Doors is engaged in women’s ministry, emergency aid to victims of violent persecution, biblical and pastoral training, vocational learning projects, trauma, counselling and more.



Pray for Pakistan

++ Pray for Christians in Pakistan, especially those who are evangelizing and risk being charged with blasphemy by friends, family and neighbours.”

We pray for the government and leaders in Pakistan to be vigilant in creating a peaceful society and to diligently seek justice for all its people. May the leaders of all nations be protected from the pride and temptations that come with power. Lead us all into Your kingdom

May we be diligent here in Australia to stand for what is right and under Your covenant laws no matter how small an issue that may be.

We ask that You will protect the children of the world and other vulnerable people from abduction, from slavery and from child marriage. May we not stand by, starting with each one of us to protect those who are in a position where they are unable to protect themselves.

Bring more people to you we prayer.

Your Spirit move and Your grace pour out to all.

We lay down to You our lives and all that You have given us to steward and in this time ask you to show us how you want us to use these for Your glory and in Jesus name

DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING

SATURDAY 24TH JUNE

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH

9.00am TO 5.00pm

All welcome to come and go as you please

Please note warning:

If you would like to fast during this time.

but you have a medical condition, please be sure to check with your doctor before going ahead and do not attempt this without your doctor's approval.

If you do wish to fast **and** are medically safe to do so:
drink plenty of fluids such as water, fruit juice and tea with honey if you choose.

These will also be available to share at the Church throughout the day for those attending

Prayer points will include:

- 1. Prayer for the search for a new minister**
- 2. Prayer for the congregations of St Andrew's & St John's to love and support each other during our vacancies**
- 3. Prayer for the next 8 countries on the Open Doors Watch List**
 - **Sudan**
 - **Syria**
 - **Iraq**
 - **Iran**
 - **Yemen**
 - **Eritrea**
 - **Libya**
 - **Nigeria**
- 4. Pray for any whose faith is weakening**
- 5. Pray for all who are sick**
- 6. Pray for unity amongst Christians**