

Opportunity in Bangladesh

Although it is geographically small, Bangladesh is home to more than 160 million people, the third largest Muslim-dominant nation in the world. Yet there is ample opportunity to spread the gospel, and large numbers of people are turning to Christ.

Although Christians in Bangladesh face persecution and have good reason to be cautious in dealing with the wider community, local evangelists and pastors hike from one rural village to the next with keen new converts to evangelise and establish churches.

Mission Network News

Middle East: bringing hope

The urgent needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in the Middle East, particularly Syria, has inspired the foundation of an educational Christian TV channel to address the needs. Across the region, more than 13 million children are out of school. Violence and instability threaten their future and leave them vulnerable to poverty, child marriage and radicalisation. Besides presenting the Christian gospel, the new programs aim at promoting education, health and well-being to Arabic speakers across the region. SAT-7

Albania's Muslim converts

Christians in one Albania church, where 80% are Muslim converts, many of them young people, suffer attacks not only from Muslims but also from teachers and lecturers who promote atheistic materialism. Special Bible classes are strengthening these young people so they can respond effectively to this opposition. BF

From North Korea

A North Korean Christian has told how God sustained her through the torture and beatings she suffered because of her faith. She became a Christian after fleeing to China the 1990s, but was captured and returned to North Korea. Put into a prison camp, she endured solitary confinement for a year before being transferred to a re-education camp. There she was kicked and beaten daily, but she helped sustain her faith by quietly praying and singing in secret meetings with other Christians. She was eventually released and is now living in a secret location. Christian Telegraph

From a pastor in Malawi:

"I am teaching newly converted Christians this month through your book 'Bible Lands Then and Now' which I am translating into Chichewa. It is helping us to understand the towns, cities and countries in the Bible which they didn't know. Sometime it explains about today's names and the past names used in the Bible, and the pictures help a lot. These books help us to understand the Bible clearly." Bridgeway



Dafur, Sudan

War has raged in the Darfur area of Sudan since 2003, based on political, economic and ethnic issues. Hundreds of thousands have died or been placed in large camps. Christians struggle to survive in these camps, though in one way they are better off than those in the towns and village, because they can at least meet together for worship and mutual encouragement.

Meanwhile, Christians back in the towns and villages struggle to earn a living. The most vulnerable are those who have left Islam to follow Christ, which often means they lose their jobs, are evicted from their homes and are no longer able to educate their children.

Bibles in China

The Communist government of China, which allows a certain number of Chinese Bibles to be printed and distributed to churches every year, has banned the online sale of Chinese Bibles. There is an urgent need for the Word of God in China, where the church is still growing strongly, but if new believers do not have a Bible they are vulnerable to false teaching.

The government clearly recognises the power of the Bible, otherwise it would not try to restrict its circulation. Moreover, the government is now interfering with the text of Scripture to make it conform to Communist ideology. Attempts to curb Christian influence are further seen in the ongoing drive to remove crosses and other visible signs of Christianity from buildings. Barnabas Fund

Prayers answered in Bulgaria

The Bulgarian Parliament has agreed not to pass into law prohibitive amendments to the nation's Religious Denominations Act after thousands of Christians held public protests in the capital, Sofia. The law represented a crackdown on religious activity that would have affected many evangelical churches, restricting evangelism and banning worship outside officially recognised buildings. Religious groups would also have needed 300 members to be officially recognised. The government might have backed down, but churches have been awakened to the need for increased prayer and vigilance.

Barnabas Fund

Algeria's religious 'cold war'

The 'cold war' against Christians in Algeria seems to have been stepped up, with a spike in church closures, seizures and arrests. Even the UN Human Rights Committee has publicly urged the Algerian government to stop harassing its Christian minority.

Legal registration of church organisations is either ignored or deliberately hampered, and individual Christians have been put on trial for allegedly 'shaking the faith of Muslims.' Buildings used for Christian worship cannot operate without a permit, but applications for permits are no longer granted. Bibles have now been a prohibited import for more than a year. Foreign Christians who appear to the authorities to be giving help to local Christians are blacklisted and refused visas in future.

Algeria has Christian roots dating back to the second century, but it is now 97% Muslim. The President is behind a drive to use Sunni Islam as a way of promoting national unity, and anything seen to be at variance with that aim is considered a security threat.

Mission Network News

Scriptures in Papua

Various missions and local churches are working together to accelerate Bible translation in Papua, where only five of the hundreds of tribal languages have a complete Bible. Among a nominally Christian populace there is a strong body of fervent believers who have a hunger for Scripture, especially the opportunity to read the Bible in their heart language.

Mission Network News

Testing time in Laos

Twenty Christian families (105 people) in a rural part of Laos were given one month to abandon their Christian faith, leave the village, or be put in prison. The church leaders responded by showing the local district head that, according to the national constitution, Christianity is a recognised religion in Laos. But the district head simply replied that in his area Christians will no longer be allowed.

The church leaders are trying to bring their case before the central government, but in practice it has little control over district decisions. Five of the twenty families have given up their faith in fear. Pray that the other fifteen will stand firm.

BF

From a pastor in Kenya:

"These books are highly valuable. How can one be a teacher without being taught? Can a blind man lead another blind man? He is almost certain to fall or be carried away by funny doctrine in these perilous days. The safeguard is the Word of God. If we knew our Bibles well, Satan would not have much power over us. I tell people that by following these study methods they will be surprised how their knowledge will increase as they make Bible study the centre of their reading."

Bridgeway

Evangelicals and Catholics in Chile

As the Catholic Church in Chile declines, the evangelical church grows. Catholics, who were once 80% of the population, are now fewer than 60%, and church attendance is barely 10%. Evangelicals meanwhile have grown to 20% of the population, but nominalism has now become a problem with them also, and only 50% attend church regularly. The church is in need of revival.

One sign of a healthy change in evangelical churches is that they have made inroads into the upper strata of society, where people have until now been apathetic to the gospel. The life-changing gospel should motivate these new Christians to use their influence to benefit the nation.

Another encouraging sign is that the poor, who historically have been the focus of evangelistic work, are now being helped in education and work training. Holistic ministries are bearing fruit and should help close the gap between rich and poor. But amid all these improvements is the danger that an improved quality of life will cause Christians to become complacent. There is need for greater vision for world evangelisation.

Operation World