

Ray of hope for Uzbekistan

A change in Uzbekistan's presidency has given some hope to the church. The government has become more tolerant of Christian activity, even allowing a limited number of Bibles to be imported. For the first time in 17 years, church buildings have obtained registration, though meetings in homes are still illegal. At a Christian camp, 43 converts from Islam were arrested and the leaders fined, but the fines were not as heavy and the treatment not as harsh as previously.

Somalis in Kenya

Impoverished Somali Christian refugees in a Kenyan camp have received sewing machines and other help from aid organisations to help them start their own businesses. But Kenyan authorities want to close the camp and send the refugees back to Somalia, where they would be in great danger. The declared goal of Somalia's fanatical Muslim leaders is to rid the country of Christians.

Barnabas Fund

From a pastor in Nigeria

"Thank you for the Worldnews each month. It helps us to pray for our brothers and sisters in other countries who are having deep problems with violence and opposition like us. But we keep working in the gospel and have just opened a new church. But the library is empty, so please send me as many books as you can, new ones or old ones."

Bridgeway

Ecuador's Christian growth

In 1960, Ecuador had Latin America's lowest percentage of evangelical believers, but remarkable growth over the next fifty years saw numbers increase seventy-fold, till there were 1.2 million in 2010. Most growth was in the rapidly growing cities and among the Quichua people.

With such numbers, believers can have an impact on society, but problems arise when churches lose their evangelistic zeal and turn into megachurches, where often the first concern is to cater for a Christianised clientele.

Nevertheless, mission vision is growing, and the number of Ecuadorians in cross-cultural mission has increased. Ecuador has always been a base for international gospel radio, with over 1,200 hours of broadcasts per week in at least a dozen languages, plus support ministries in education, pastoral training and medicine.

OW/HCJB

Response to the gospel in Japan

Japan, once known as 'the missionary's graveyard,' is reporting unusually large numbers of people responding to the gospel. The significant date that marked this apparent upturn was 2011, the year of devastating national disasters. Churches are now preparing to make an impact through international events that will put Japan in the limelight such as the Summer Olympic of 2020.

Mission Network News

NEPAL:

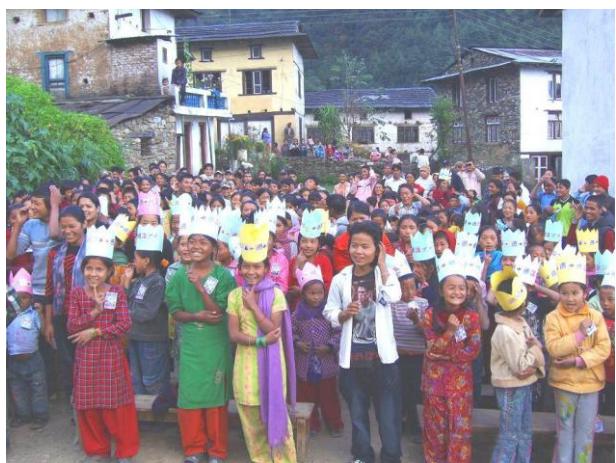
Camps and vacation Bible schools

Despite the government's effort to crush Christian activities in Nepal, Scripture Union still reaches hundreds of children, young people and adults with the Christian message of life and hope.

In one camp, about 250 children, mostly from the Tharu tribe, joined in a Vacation Bible School where thirty five volunteer teachers guided the children through the Word of God. In seven adult camps in different locations, over 200 people trained in how to understand and use God's Word better. The plan for the next yearly cycle is to double the numbers for all events, though much prayer is required. The government is showing a growing reluctance to renew registrations for Christian ministries.

The Nepali Bible reading guide continues to be printed and distributed, bringing direction and encouragement to 2,500 families through daily Bible reading and prayer.

SU Nepal



Refugees and displaced persons

Worldwide the number of people displaced through violence, persecution, conflict or human rights violations is 68 million, the highest on record. An additional 10 million stateless people have no official nationality, which for most means no freedom of movement and no access to education, healthcare or employment opportunities.

UNHCR

Vietnam's anti-Christian authorities

In 2017 Vietnam enacted the Law on Belief in Religion, which requires religious groups to be registered and approved. The wording of the law is vague and consequently is being used officially to limit church activities. Like China, Vietnam is looking for a future that sees Communism expanded and Christianity reduced. If Christians choose to remain faithful to Christ, they must endure intense pressure, especially those believers who speak out against corruption and oppression.

The government is especially harsh on the Hmong Christians in northern Vietnam, where numbers have increased markedly to a nominal 400,000. Many Hmong have crossed borders into neighbouring Laos and Thailand, while others have relocated to other parts of Vietnam in search of a more peaceful life. But all over Vietnam, Christians suffer discrimination from authorities. Christian students are often denied scholarships to university, and others are refused employment, which results in many falling into poverty.

Voice of the Martyrs

Tolerance in Kuwait

Kuwait is unique among Gulf states in that it officially recognises those of its citizens who are Christian – 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. There are Kuwaiti converts to Christianity from Islam, but only the Lord knows how many. Pray for their protection and encouragement.

Barnabas Fund

Mali, West Africa

In a Muslim country that was once a model of religious tolerance, there is a legacy of unrest from the outburst of Islamic aggression that was put down by foreign military intervention a few years ago. In the extreme weather conditions of the Sahel, many of the common people suffer agricultural and economic losses, which Islamists seize upon to create trouble. The church also takes these opportunities to share the love of Christ, making inroads into communities through practical aid initiatives.

Much of the evangelism and discipleship training is done through small group Bible studies. These are conducted mainly by local Christian leaders and missionaries from other West African countries.

Bridgeway

Reaching remote Siberia

A 25-page book of Bible stories has been published to introduce the gospel to a remote tribal group in Siberia. These people, who can only be reached by a long helicopter ride followed by a six-hour snowmobile journey, number about 15,000 and are mainly reindeer herders and fishermen. They are also animists, and the Bible storybook declares Jesus' authority over nature, sickness, death and demons, as well as his power to forgive sins. *OM*

French Polynesia

Tahiti, where 70% of French Polynesia's 300,000 people live, is a 'paradise lost.' Once a strongly Christian centre that sent missionaries all over the Pacific, Tahiti now suffers from increasing vice, widespread immorality and serious challenges to values once based on a Christian ethic. Whatever spiritual openness remains is threatened by materialism.

No longer are Tahitian missionaries found in other lands as they once were, and in Tahiti itself the number of believers with a vital personal faith is diminishing. Into the spiritual void come pagan occultism and various syncretic and foreign sects. There are still plenty of nominal Catholic and Protestant Christians, but churches need a spiritual revolution.

Operation World

An evangelist from Swaziland who works across the border in South Africa writes:

"This is a remote unevangelised part of South Africa where many have not heard the gospel. Spiritually the church is growing and these Bridgeway books have played a great role in helping church members with their Bible study. But we pray for the youths to get employment, since it is difficult to find income around here and the majority are unemployed."

Bridgeway

Bible distribution

More than 26 million printed editions of the ESV Bible have been published and distributed during the past year. An additional 100,000 ESV Global Study Bibles were distributed free to pastors and church leaders in 37 needy countries, bringing the total to 350,000 since this distribution scheme began.

Crossway