

## China moves against the church

The Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) new 'Administrative Measures for Religious Clergy' will come into force on 1 May. From then on, all clergy – that is, those who 'engage in religious teaching activities' – must hold a clergy card as proof they are registered in the national database. To be registered, the religious worker must be identified by a registered CCP-approved church and be willing to 'support the CCP' and be supervised and managed by the CCP's Religious Affairs Department.

The choice will be between (1) compliance, in serving the CCP, (2) open resistance, resulting in prison, or (3) secret resistance, moving ministry deep underground. It is highly likely that, within a few years, all China's 'resisting clergy' will be either suffering in prison or hidden underground.

*Religious Liberty*

## Malawi: Helping others

*When Bridgeway sent a gift to a local pastor hoping he could use it to improve his living conditions, he used it to buy maize and Bibles and pay school fees for destitute Christians. When we expressed surprise at this, he responded: "I don't do it because I don't have needs, but these people are doing their best to serve the Lord with the little education they have and I take my time to translate certain pages of your books and tapes too. They listen and I do translation for them. They remind me of men whom King David had initially. They were the rejects of their time but when they attached to David, the rejects became warriors and heroes. When I look at these couples, in most cases I shed tears of joy when they tell their testimonies and deep down in my heart I know that I have friends in Australia who care for me their flock in Malawi. So from what I get, let me show the love that I get from others to them."*

*Bridgeway*

## The Kazakhstan church

Life for Christians in Kazakhstan is difficult and dangerous because of laws that are gradually Islamising society. Christian books are censored or destroyed and even sharing one's faith in a private home is technically illegal.

*BF*

## Persecution increasing

An annual survey revealed that in 2020 the number of Christians killed for their faith rose by 60%, with 91% of the killings occurring in Africa, mostly in Nigeria. One in eight of all Christians worldwide suffer high levels of persecution and every day an average of 13 Christians are killed for their faith. In many places the COVID-19 pandemic has created a more hostile environment for Christians, who are often blamed, whether directly or indirectly, for the pandemic and discriminated against in receiving medical services.'

*Open Doors*



## Islam in the Pacific islands

Islam is penetrating previously 'Christian' regions of the Pacific. This is often done through the offers from wealthy Islamic nations to provide free education to the children of countries such as Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Papua New Guinea. Some children are educated at Islamic centres that have been established in these countries, while others are taken to countries such as Malaysia, Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Islam's influence in the Pacific grows as Muslim propaganda highlights issues of deprivation and injustice, whether perceived or real. Politically, China is also exerting influence. The church in this 90% Christian region of the world is being challenged as never before.

*Barnabas Fund*

## An evangelist in Ghana

*"The evangelism outreach was very successful. One thousand two hundred people gave their lives to Christ and we arranged with the churches to do the follow up. Those who gave their lives to Christ are responding to discipleship in the churches. Among these churches we spent many hours to pray for the whole world – Africa, Pacific, Asia, Europe, Australia, North America and South America. Disciples must be motivated to engage in mission all over the world".*

*Bridgeway*

## Aiming to transform Sudan

The Transitional Military Council (TMC) that is overseeing Sudan's transformation from a *sharia* state to a religiously tolerant state is making progress, but not without opposition.

Among the most notable changes have been the abolition of the apostasy law and the release of Sudan's women from cruel oppression. Peace has been restored in regions of previous conflict, and public church activities have been encouraged – though church properties confiscated under the previous regime have not yet been returned.

The social, political and religious aspects of the reforms have been widely welcomed in spite of pockets of militant Islamic resistance. Islamists threatened to wreck the reform process when the US persuaded the TMC to give diplomatic recognition to Israel and they are active in trying to stop any normalising of church operations. Nine churches have now been struck by arson and local Islamic leaders have hindered or prevented repairs. But overall the TMC reforming process is prevailing and free elections are planned for 2022.

*Barnabas Fund / Religious Liberty*

## The churches of Denmark

In spite of having the kind of secularisation common to many European countries, Denmark still has a core of Christian traditions. Three-quarters of the population remain members of the national church (Lutheran), though about half are agnostic or atheistic. Church attendance is only 2%, but organisations promoting renewal within the state church bring hope that fresh vitality will show the relevance of the church in today's society.

One encouraging sign is from migrant workers and refugees, many of whom are Christians. Others, who never heard the gospel in their countries of origin, are open to Christian witness. More than 150 churches of migrants have been established in recent years and an estimated one-third of people in church on Sunday are in foreign-run churches.

*Operation World*

## Public library in Vietnam

Bible Society Vietnam, with the help of Christian business people and the approval of the government, has set up a public library in the CBD of Ho Chi Minh City. It is hoped this will become a positive Christian symbol in the nation. The library has 5,000 books, including Vietnamese titles in biblical studies, theology, ministry, translations and history. It also has a room of English language Bible resources and books on sociology and languages. Vietnam's government is Communist and main religion Buddhism. One in ten people identify as Christian.

*Eternity News*

## Mexico

Protestants in Mexico have grown beyond 10% of the population for the first time ever. In Latin America, Catholicism has historically dominated the religious landscape, especially in Mexico. Although most Mexicans still identify as Catholic, their numbers are decreasing at what the Church considers an alarming rate.

*Christian Solidarity Worldwide*

## Indian outreach reaction

*The Nadar people, originally one the lower castes of the Hindu system in Tamil Nadu, are now well educated and some have important positions in government and business. There was a mass movement of conversions to Christianity amongst the Nadars in the 19th century and now there are an estimated two million Nadar Christians. They are peaceable and active in sharing their Christian faith, sending out missionaries across India. But the killing of a Nadar father and son by Hindu extremists with police support is intended, it seems, to be a lesson to teach Christians who is in control.*

*The drive for an all-India law against conversions from Hinduism is strong. India's Hindu nationalist government has recently cancelled the licences of six Christian organisations to receive donations from outside the country, the aim being to starve them of funds.*

*Barnabas Fund*

## Mozambique attacks

In Mozambique, where the church is growing vigorously among the ethno-religious and nominally Christian population, a Muslim minority in the north is rampaging across the region, killing Christians and destroying church property. The brutal attacks are carried out with apparent impunity because the police and army are more concerned with a power struggle between them than with defending helpless citizens. In a series of savage attacks, fifty people were beheaded, homes burnt and women abducted. The attacks are part of a campaign by the ISIS-connected terrorists to establish a caliphate in the mineral-rich Cabo Delgado province. Since 2017 more than 2,000 people have been killed and 430,000 left homeless.

*Barnabas Fund*