

'Sinicisation' of Hong King

In May, for the first time ever, a seminar on 'The Sinicisation of Christianity' was held in Hong Kong, the so-called 'freer' part of China. The seminar heralds the Communist government's determination to end the era of comparative freedom for Hong Kong's church.

Sinicisation, promoted as religion 'with Chinese characteristics,' requires all religions to serve the State. Indeed, the primary obligation of sinicised Christianity is to lead the people to love and obey the Communist State.

According to the high-level religious officials who spoke at the seminar, sinicised Christianity is 'patriotic' Christianity, and true Hong Kong Christian patriots will sinicise their churches. The implication is that anyone who rejects the order to register with and serve the State will be branded unpatriotic and treated as a threat to national security, as occurs on the mainland. The government's intentions against Christianity in Hong Kong are clear.

Religious Liberty

Maluku, Indonesia

The island of Maluku is an animistic region in the Muslim country of Indonesia, but it has a well established and growing Christian community. For many of Maluku's people, however, the national language Indonesian is only their second or third language, and the recent production of the New Testament in their heart language, Ambonese Malay, is a cause for much rejoicing.

Wycliffe

Increasing violence against Nigeria's Christians

Statistics indicate that in the past five years more Christians have died for their faith in Nigeria than in the rest of the world combined. Much of the slaughter is taking place not in the already fanatically Muslim north, but in the Middle Belt that was once a buffer between the Muslim north and the Christian south. In March and April this year more than 150 Christians in the Middle Belt were killed and more than 40 homes destroyed. In May a further 170 were killed, countless more injured and over 100 violently abducted. The total number killed in the past five years is estimated to be at least 10,000. In these circumstances the following paragraph from a local Christian is all the more striking:

"One piece of good news is that I have two Muslim converts. A Muslim scholar, an Imam, started coming to my church with his family, he got converted and desires to serve God. By the grace of God the church is seeing that he is nurtured to maturity. Another person is a female from a different place. The joy to see these people in our church is great, so please join us to praise God. Usually, when a Muslim of this calibre gets converted it attracts persecution, therefore we covet your prayers for them and for us to have wisdom as we stand by them."

Open Doors/Barnabas Fund/Bridgeway

The church in Montenegro

In the small Balkan country of Montenegro, the evangelical community is small but growing. Church workers from neighbouring Serbia have established active churches that are seeing ongoing increase.

The new churches, while only a handful, have a vision for sharing the gospel, in spite of opposition from the long-established, but largely lifeless, Orthodox church.

Operation World

Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz Republic is young and over half its population are under 30 years of age. The radio broadcaster FEBC has six FM stations to reach the unreached 93% of the population, many of whom are teenagers. Pray that the first generation of local Kyrgyz believers will be built on biblical truth and have an evangelistic outlook.

FEBC

From an evangelist in Zambia

"Since fifteen years ago I have planted more than ten churches, but this has been the slowest. We have spent more in helping them materially than we ever spent in all the other church plants put together.

I have learnt much about our social responsibilities. What do you do when you disciple a believer and he tells you he had to miss church because they never had a meal for days? How do you continue to tell a family that God loves them and will provide for them when they are still in shabby clothes, barefoot and have not enough to eat? Also they are not attending school because their parents cannot afford to clothe them and pay fees.

It is hard going. I want to start a shop that can help people with their basic necessities, while I still preach the gospel and make good disciples of Jesus Christ."

Bridgeway

Moderate change in Saudi Arabia

The slight liberalising of laws in Saudi Arabia has brought limited gains not only to the country's women, but also to the small Christian community. This year a few church services for migrant workers have been allowed in selected places, though open displays of faith by Saudi citizens are still forbidden. Saudis who profess faith in Christ are still liable to execution, though there has been no report of a Christian being executed in recent years.

Barnabas Fund

Ethiopia – two years of gospel preaching

A local ministry writes: "We can report that the number of converts over the past two years was: Male = 3228, Female = 2470, Total = 5698. This is because of the proclamation of the gospel. And we want the converts to grow, so where possible we give them donations of books sponsored to us by Bridgeway."

Bridgeway

Children in hostile environments

In many countries, children of Christian families, far from being shielded from the persecution their parents endure, are often on the frontline. Hostility from teachers and classmates, along with pressure to convert to the majority religion, can be daily challenges. Christian pupils can be marked down or failed in exams. In some countries Christian parents are unable to send their children to school because of poverty, which is sometimes the result of anti-Christian discrimination.

In some cases children have no school to go to, being refugees fleeing persecution, famine, or conflict. Others, displaced by terrorist violence, find that no school will accept them, either because they are migrant intruders or simply because they are Christians.

In a number of countries children are banned from attending Sunday school, Christian camps or church, even if accompanied by parents. Pupils in hostile countries may be encouraged to report on their Christian parents if they see them praying or reading the Scriptures.

Receiving a Christian education significantly boosts children's prospects of escaping the cycle of poverty and illiteracy that traps so many. Give thanks to God for the many Christian ministries bringing schooling to those who are so poor and marginalised that, without these ministries, they would probably receive no education at all.

Suffering Church

A fine line in Nicaragua

Churches in Nicaragua that speak out against the government's injustice and human rights violations are viewed as destabilising agents. This makes them a target for hostility, which can include intimidation, harassment, arrests and violent attacks. The government is particularly hostile to those churches that provided shelter and care for people during the widespread protests that broke out in 2018 against the country's dictatorial regime.

Open Doors

Trouble in India

Anti-Christian violence has broken out in the nominally Christian regions of India's north-eastern hill tribe states, most seriously in Manipur. Fanatical Hindus, emboldened by the fervent Hindu nationalist party led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, are targeting all things Christian and trying to force people to convert to Hinduism.

According to various reports, over 100 Christians have been killed and more than 300 churches destroyed, along with 2,000 Christian houses and hundreds of motor vehicles. An estimated 50,000 Christians are now internally displaced, while an indefinite number have fled for their lives to other countries. The violence shows no signs of abating.

Religious Liberty/ Mission Network News

A preacher in Ghana

"After I completed my university degree, my parents and some family members have become my real oppositions. They don't consent that I should do the work of the ministry but say I should work for money so that they can benefit. My parents have ten children and I am the only one privileged to attend university, but I also know God has called me into full-time ministry. Please remember me in prayers. I know they will understand as time goes on and will join me."

Two years later: "The church we started is growing, and my parents who opposed me two years ago they now are part of my ministry, though they live in another town. By the help of God, they are now one of the backbones to my ministry and support me with various advice. One time my father visited my ministry and took a microphone and apologised to the whole church for when he was trying to stop me from preaching. What the enemy thought he was using against me turned to be a testimony to the glory of God."

Bridgeway