

Christmas in Nigeria

“A local Christian writes: “You might have read in the news about the strike by Fulani militants on Christmas Eve. More than 200 lost their lives and 25 communities were completely burnt down, including a dozen churches. Tens of thousands are now homeless, while hundreds are receiving treatment across health centres in Plateau State. This is the worst attack since June 2018.

“However, the cheering news is that we were able to celebrate Christmas with 80 orphans in an orphanage home here in Jos by using part of the money you sent to us in November. The orphanage houses 120 orphans, but 40 of them had gone to spend Christmas with families in camps around Jos for IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons].”

Bridgeway

The unusual in Turkey

A new church building recently opened in Istanbul is believed to be the first such building opened with government backing in 100 years. The participation of the country’s president in the inauguration ceremony suggests that the event was used for political show and does not indicate any change in the government’s anti-Christian attitude. The president is open about his ambitions to spread Turkish Islamic influence, as if to re-establish the Ottoman empire. Nevertheless, 750 Christians are now able to gather openly for worship in this prominent new building.

Bangladesh Bible translations

Four translations of the New Testament into languages spoken by tribal ethnic minorities in Bangladesh have recently been completed. Please pray that the Word of God will encourage, comfort, teach, rebuke and train in righteousness believers amongst the Tripura, Khuang, Kruck and Kol peoples as they read it in the language of their hearts.

Barnabas Fund

China’s increasingly anti-Christian agenda

New Measures on the Administration of Religious Activity Venues stipulate that Religious Activity Venues must pro-actively support the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This includes the establishment of ‘a study system’ through which church leaders will be indoctrinated so that sermon content advances CCP agendas. The Measures will ensure that legal, CCP-registered churches are fully sinicised (made Chinese) as a branch of the CCP propaganda system. It is becoming close to impossible for faithful, gospel-focused Christians to remain in the system.

Religious Liberty

Pakistan’s churches

In a land where many news items deal with the unjust treatment of Christians, it should be remembered that churches still function openly and many are enthusiastically reaching out with the gospel. Bible colleges and similar institutions also operate fruitfully. One theological seminary in Lahore, founded more than 50 years ago, has seen more than 700 graduates plant more than 350 churches across the nation.

Barnabas Fund

Life under siege in Burkina Faso

Because of Islamic aggression, 40% of the previously tolerant country of Burkina Faso (in West Africa) is now controlled by Islamic terrorists. An estimated 6,100 schools and 373 health clinics are closed or non-operational, mostly in the north and east; 46 localities are besieged and conditions are intolerable. Terrorists attack once-peaceful towns and villages, killing many and wounding many more. Christians are being pressured to convert to Islam and many have died attempting to flee. Women are routinely abducted and held as sex-slaves. Water is rationed, food is scarce and churches are closed. Despite this, says one report, ‘requests for baptisms are pouring in – please pray.’

Religious Liberty

Honduras today

Five decades of evangelical growth in Honduras has seen the numbers grow from 32,000 to 1,750,000, which is 23% of the population. Sadly, much of this progress is marred by division into countless denominations and much rivalry. Yet many churches still reach out, especially to the marginalised poor. Garbage dump children are more prevalent than in other nations of the region and street children are cleaned out by ruthless groups in the name of ‘social cleansing.’ Violent youth gangs are fostered by drug cartels. The country’s visibly large church faces a huge challenge.

Operation World

A peacemaker in Israel-Palestine

Labib Madanat, who died at the age of 57 in 2021, was director of the Palestinian Bible Society and then coordinator of all the Bible societies in the Holy Land. Despite being seen as a troublemaker by many Palestinians because of his Christian faith and as an enemy by many Jews because of his Arab heritage, Madanat routinely found ways to confound both communities through his insistence on loving those who disagreed with or traumatized him.

The Christian bookshop he opened in Gaza in 1998 was bombed and partly destroyed by Hamas militants in 2007 and his co-worker was kidnapped and murdered. But the local community rallied to support the bookstore and it was defiantly reopened. In the words of Madanat, “We sent a message to the people of Gaza that we’re continuing our ministry. We sent a message of forgiveness to the people who attacked us. We have so much love for the people of Gaza that I don’t think there will be enough hate to quench this love.”

Madanat always said he had three conversions. The first was in Jordan, where he became a Christian, the second was when he came to love Muslims, and the third was when he came to love Jews. Learning to love Muslims was difficult because of their animosity towards Christians, and learning to love Jews just as difficult because of their animosity towards Palestinians. But he learnt Hebrew and began to talk to members of the Israeli Defence Force about his faith. This led him to play an instrumental role in the publication of the Bible in modern Hebrew. Even in the war of 2008 he refused to let bitterness overwhelm him, but brought aid and prayer to injured Israeli soldiers, always identifying himself as a Palestinian Christian.

Madanat summarised his attitude thus: “To engage in the blame game only perpetuates violence and evil. This does not mean we acquit the guilty, but we submit the file of all the guilty ones (and I am one of them) to the One who judges justly and whose gates of mercy are always open for those who seek it. We all belong to our nations, but as believers we also belong to the body of Christ, and this gives meaning and value to a higher citizenship, our heavenly citizenship.”

Madanat spent 14 years helping restructure the Middle East ministries of the Arab Israeli Bible Society, the Bible Society in Israel and the Palestinian Bible Society into a ministry of constructive collaboration. The testimony of others was: “His heart was full of love for Jesus, his commitment was for the cause of the Bible and his vision was to share the Word with no geographical boundaries.”

Christianity Today

Vietnam’s Christians

The communist government of Vietnam monitors Christian activity and exercises a high level of pressure on all Christians. Christian converts from a Buddhist or ethnic-animist background face the most severe persecution, not only from the authorities, but also from families, friends and neighbours. Sometimes their homes are destroyed and they are forced to leave their villages. In spite of this, their numbers keep increasing.

Open Doors

Some relief in India

It is hoped that the action of Karnataka state’s government in overturning its anti-conversion laws might prove to be lasting and even be copied by other states. A dozen Indian states still have anti-conversion laws, which are regularly used against Christians. Religious freedom is at risk in India.

Mission Network News

Latvia’s spiritual need

The Soviet departure from Latvia left a vacuum that was quickly filled by negative influences. EU money also brought EU-style social problems. The prevalent attitude of spiritual apathy, even hopelessness, helped produce a high suicide rate. Although more than half the people nominally belong to a Christian confession, only a small minority practice their faith. In most churches, as in the country as a whole, there is need for an injection of spiritual dynamism and renewal.

Operation World

Zimbabwe: books and Bibles

“Today I met with a remote rural congregation and gave a *Bridgeway Bible Commentary* and *Dictionary* to the main leaders and gave 10 of the smaller books to selected people. They have a serious challenge in these places because of lack of Bibles. People are literate, but in a congregation of 128 only 9 people had Bibles.”

On Ethiopia’s university campuses

“My brother and his wife are working in evangelism in the community church and on the university campus of Jimma, while I and my wife concentrate on the university here in Addis Ababa. We also have a representative at the university in Debre Berhan. We want all university students in Ethiopia to come to know Jesus Christ.”

Bridgeway