significant news for christians
Some news that's encouraging—some disturbing. Read with discernment. Watch and pray.

THE Church Around the WORLD

January 2022

Country in Focus: **Cape Verde** (1)

Cape Verde, with its 1,600 square miles spread across 15 islands, lies 400 miles off the west coast of Africa. The population of 600,000 speaks Creole Portuguese. The land is mostly arid, meaning that nearly 80 percent of all foodstuffs must be imported. The country is heavily dependent on foreign aid, and its scant resources have been poorly managed in the past, intensifying Cape Verde's poverty. Nearly 500,000 Caboverdians live in migrant communities around the world. Most citizens are Catholic in name only, and in practice, they are more influenced by superstitions and African fetishism. The privileged position of the Catholic church with the government ended in 1975, and now the islands are a secular state with freedom of religion. Christian literature is lacking in Creole, and most people have only a rudimentary grasp of Portuguese.

Prayer concerns:

- Pray for government leaders to make good decisions and develop the economy for the betterment of the whole nation.
- Pray that more indigenous leaders and pastors may be trained to meet the growing demand for qualified leaders.
- Pray that maturing Christian believers would grow in their faith and have access to Christian literature and teaching, despite poverty and geographic isolation.
- Pray that expatriates will find faith in Jesus and return to the islands as strong witnesses.

Pakistan Churches Increase Security over Taliban Fears (2)

With the Taliban back in power in Afghanistan, Pakistan's Christians fear an increase in terror attacks. Churches are tightening their security by posting armed guards, increasing surveillance and identity checking, and swiping church attendees with metal detectors before they enter the building for services.

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Pakistan Churches Increase Security over Taliban Fears, continued from page 1

Pakistani human-rights activist Sajid Christopher told Aid to the Church in Need that militant organizations like the Taliban-linked group may capitalize on recent events in Afghanistan by going after Christians and other religious minorities. "When the Taliban were in power before, there were a lot of terrorist attacks in Pakistan," he said.

Chinese Communist Party Bans Christian Martyr Tributes (3)

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) recently mandated that Christians pray for dead Communist soldiers and simultaneously banned all commemorations for martyrs of the faith. As the country celebrated the seventy-sixth anniversary of its victory in the Anti-Fascist War, the CCP reportedly issued the directive to all churches involved with the state-sponsored Protestant Three-Self Church. The CCP threatened churches in the ordinance, saying they will face consequences if they fail to comply with the orders.

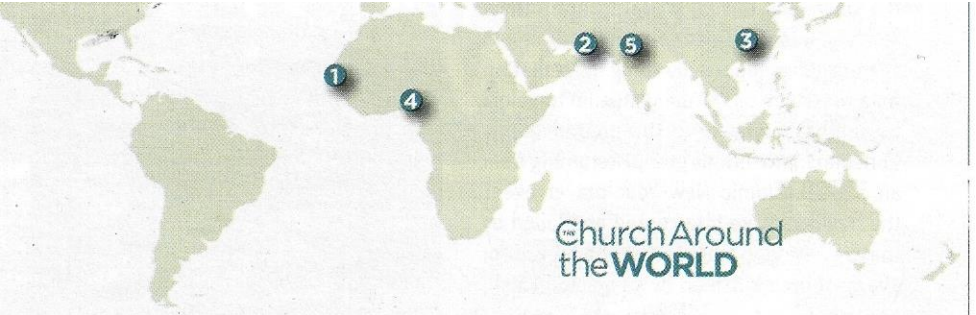
The CCP also ordered churches to participate in the hundredth anniversary of its founding and mandated that pastors incorporate

This month you can . . .

Grow Your Small Church in Three Ways

If fewer than 100 members attend your church on a given weekend, you're in the majority. In fact, 60 percent of Protestant churches fall into this category. Nevertheless, you and your church probably want your ministry to touch as many people as it can. Here are three things every church can do to grow and become more inviting to members and visitors alike.

1. **Work on your welcome.** Make a concerted effort to welcome visitors as soon as they walk through the front door. This will increase the chance they'll return next Sunday and the Sunday after that. (Eighty percent of churchgoers say this greeting is very important.) Visitors will also appreciate a note following up after the service or even an invitation to dinner with one of your church families.
2. **Invest in young people.** Thirty-five percent of millennials claim they don't go to church because it's not personally relevant to them. To build an engaged community, create programming that speaks directly to younger members. When children and teens are excited about your worship, they'll spread the word to their families and friends. Ultimately, an investment in young people is an investment in the future of your ministry and your church community.
3. **Increase your accessibility.** Despite their best intentions, even the most faithful churchgoers can't make it to church every Sunday. Offering members and visitors the option to stream your services live, wherever they are, is a great way to make sure they can still connect to their faith community. People who are interested in your church will greatly appreciate being able to watch a sermon online, and many non-churched people may feel intimidated going to a new church in person without having first been able to get a sense of its worship style. Watching online will give them the confidence that a church is the right fit for them.



Chinese Communist Party Bans Christian Martyr Tributes, continued from page 2

elements of President Xi Jinping's centennial celebration speech in their sermons.

YouVersion Partners with illumiNations for Bible Translators

The YouVersion Bible app team has partnered with the Bible translation group illumiNations to translate the Bible, with the goal that 95 percent of the global population have access to the Good News by 2033.

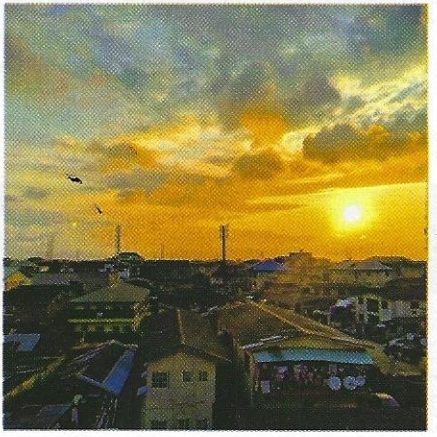
YouVersion's founder Bobby Gruenewald explained that many people across the globe lack access to Scriptures written in their primary language. "There's a lot of languages that are spoken in the world," Gruenewald said. "It's well over 6,000 languages. But unfortunately, . . . there are still many people and thousands of languages that actually have no access to Scripture at all, no Scripture in their heart language. . . . We're definitely excited about being a part of an effort to change that and make that reality different going forward," he added. "Most people thought it would be at least another 100 or 200 years at the pace that we were going, but there's been a rapid acceleration, and it's still a lot of work to come, but there's definitely hope and a sense of that to be possible by 2033."

At present, YouVersion makes over 2,500 Bible texts available, representing over 1,700 languages.

According to the illumiNations website, the Bible still needs to be translated into about 3,732 languages. The Bible translation group hopes to ultimately have 100 of the world's "most strategic languages" available in "two viable translations."

Dozens of Christians Slain in Nigeria (4)

Fulani herdsmen and local Muslims killed dozens of Christians in and near Jos, Nigeria, in recent attacks. Armed with machetes and guns, herdsmen attacked a predominantly Christian community, killing 16 Christians and then burning to death 17 others after setting fire to their homes. The dead included 12 children.



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Dozens of Christians Slain in Nigeria, continued from page 3

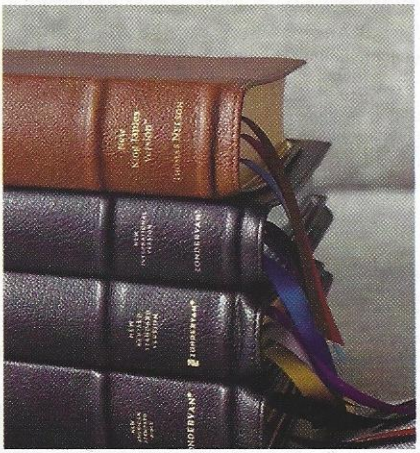
Sources confirmed that 33 Christians were killed in the attacks in the area, which is near the University of Jos, while several others received hospital treatment for injuries.

The killings reportedly came in retaliation for a massacre of 25 Fulani Muslim travelers by youths belonging to the predominantly Christian Irigwe ethnic group. Returning from an annual Islamic New Year prayer event, the travelers were intercepted and killed by the Irigwes, who were retaliating for a prior killing of their kinsmen by suspected Fulani herdsmen.

Taliban Increasing Persecution of Christians (5)

Open Doors ranked Afghanistan as the second-most dangerous country in the world for Christians even before the Taliban took control. Now a pastor who built churches in Afghanistan is warning that the Taliban will "exterminate" the church there.

"We're hearing from reliable sources that the Taliban demand people's phones, and if they find a downloaded Bible on your device, they will kill you immediately," said Dr. Rex Rogers, North American President



of the Middle East media ministry SAT-7. He added, "It's incredibly dangerous right now for Afghans to have anything Christian on their phones. The Taliban have spies and informants everywhere."

A pastor in the US who works with Afghan refugees reports: "Young Christian girls are being pursued by the Taliban. The Taliban just raided the home of another church leader and confiscated his Bibles and literature." House church leaders have reportedly received letters from the Taliban warning them that they know where they are and what they are doing.

A member of the UK Parliament warns that "there are 228 missionaries in Afghanistan currently under sentence of death." Missionaries and mission groups are working feverishly to get Christian colleagues and volunteers out of the country.

You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds, O God our savior.

PSALM 65:5

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