



## **Persecuted Christians Prayer Resource**

Please find attached our prayer resource for individuals or congregations interested in praying for persecuted Christians. In this material you will find links to the websites of various organisations, as well as some specific prayers or prayer points that have been taken from those websites. Also, because some people have noted a concern regarding praying exclusively for Christians, and, indeed, because we are called to pray for the whole world, you will note some interfaith points as well.

The resource is intended to be used as a starting point, with versatility for the user kept in mind. Please consider carefully how you or your congregation can use it, noting that some resources might be too exclusive or too inclusive for some people's theological preferences.

Again, the CofS report "If One Suffers" is to be commended for its approach to this question and related issues.

If you have any questions about the attached material, please feel free to ask. Also, if you do use it, we would welcome any feedback on how the resources were used, and how well they were received.

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## **Barnabas Fund**

[www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)

<http://www.barnabasfund.org/pdffdocs/Prayercard.pdf>

1. Praise God that He is all-knowing, that in Christ He himself experienced shame, pain and agonising death. Thank Him for His promise: “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Josh 1.5).
2. Pray that all governments will work for justice and righteousness. While Jesus says that in this world we will have trouble, He does not say that it will always be present in every place.
3. Pray that leaders of liberal democracies will use their influence to find ways to reduce, if not end, persecution in countries where it occurs. Just as Paul appealed to Caesar to seek justice, so we can appeal to secular governments.
4. Pray for the growth of the Church where persecution flourishes, remembering that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”.
5. Pray for strength and courage for those experiencing persecution, and for peace that only God can bring. Thank Him that His grace is sufficient for their needs (2 Cor 12.9). Pray that their faith will not fail, but that their suffering will draw them closer to Him and increase their faith.
6. Pray that the Holy Spirit will enable persecuted Christians to forgive and love their persecutors (Matt 5:44) and that their Christ-like reactions will have an impact on their persecutors.
7. Pray that the Lord will be at work in the hearts of those who currently persecute our sisters and brothers to bring them to a saving knowledge of Himself, as He did with Saul of Tarsus.
8. Thank the Lord for the privilege of entering into the sufferings of our sisters and brothers, remembering that “if one part [of the body] suffers, every part suffers with it” (1 Cor 12.26).
9. Pray that Christians who are experiencing persecution will not lose the ability to accept or trust genuine approaches from those who have formerly persecuted them, as when the believers in Jerusalem had to accept the reality of Saul’s conversion. Pray that the Lord will give discernment, and relief from unnecessary fears.
10. Pray for yourself and for persecuted Christians to be spiritually ready for whatever tomorrow brings, be that persecution, respite from suffering, or Christ’s return.

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## **Open Doors UK and Ireland**

[www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org)

<http://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources/handbook.php>

<http://www.oduk.org/resources/documents/WorldWatchMap.pdf>

Handbook of Prayer

(Can be ordered from: <http://www.opendoorsuk.org/resources/forms/index.php>)

Our handbook of prayer is based on our annual **World Watch List** of the top 50 countries where it is hardest to be a Christian. Some face physical violence and death; others face unjust imprisonment, denial of the right to worship and to share their faith, and discrimination in employment and education.

We have created a special A2-sized poster to accompany our handbook. When put in a prominent place – on your church's bulletin board, in Sunday School classes, youth group halls etc – it will help to inform people about the extent and severity of persecution in the world and inspire them to pray for their suffering family in Christ.

### **Use it**

Using our World Watch List pray around the world for five minutes every day for 50 days! To make the most of the challenge, get hold of our Handbook of Prayer, put up a World Watch 2012 map - and away you go!

Keep it to hand as you read the newspapers, surf the internet, listen to the radio or watch TV, so that when a country is mentioned, you can immediately refer to the relevant page and pray for the Christians there.

Alternatively, [download](#)  a copy of the map onto your laptop, phone or iPad.

### **Share it**

Take it to your church or small group. Place the World Watch Map in a prominent place and ensure everyone has a copy of the handbook, so they can pray right away, and then take it home to keep for reference.

## **Release International**

[www.releaseinternational.org](http://www.releaseinternational.org)

<http://www.releaseinternational.org/pages/take-action/praying.php>

### **Praying**

#### **Praying for Persecuted Christians**

In many countries, Christians are harassed, discriminated against, slandered, unjustly accused, summarily arrested and sometimes imprisoned, beaten, exiled or killed. Violence comes both from governments and religious extremists. Your prayers can focus on four groups.

##### **Individuals** - Pray that they:

- remain **strong in faith and trust** despite physical and psychological abuse
- will be **able to forgive** those who persecute them or who fail to support them
- will **experience and know love, joy and peace** from God (Romans 8:28-39)
- will walk **humbly** in their identification with Christ's sufferings
- will be **fruitful witnesses** to others
- will be able to **balance** standing up for their rights, yet responding in grace and love

##### **Spouses** - Pray that they:

- cope with the sense of **loss and isolation**
- cope with **caring and providing** for children alone
- remain full of **faith and hope**
- **overcome any intimidation** from police or other aggressors

##### **Children** - Pray that they:

- are protected from long term **psychological/emotional harm** and bitterness
- are protected from abduction or the "**corrective teaching**" some States try to impose
- might know and experience the **love of God**

##### **Converts** - Pray that they:

- receive **help to grow** spiritually
- are **protected and provided for** should their family or community turn against them
- will have the courage to **lead others to know Christ**

## **Suggested Prayers**

Sovereign God, we worship you and acknowledge that you know all of those who suffer in your name<sup>1</sup>. We remember those who are imprisoned for their faith<sup>2</sup> and ask that they would join with the Apostle Paul to see that even though they remain captive, their chains have furthered the gospel, not frustrated it<sup>3</sup>. May they inspire and embolden their fellow believers to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly<sup>4</sup>.

God of all comfort, for those who are tortured both in body and mind, give them the grace to endure and to see their suffering as part of following in Christ's footsteps<sup>5</sup>.

Merciful God, for those asked to pay the ultimate price; who are martyred because of their love for you, may they truly know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death<sup>6</sup>.

Father God, for those who are widowed and orphaned may they know the comfort that comes from your promised presence<sup>7</sup> even when they walk through the valley<sup>8</sup>. May they be strengthened by your Spirit, enabling them to rejoice with the psalmist as they proclaim that the LORD will not abandon them in death<sup>9</sup>.

Heavenly Father, we ask that you would make us ever mindful of our brothers and sisters around the world who need us to stand with them<sup>10</sup> as they suffer in your name. Teach us what it means to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony; we pray that we would not love our lives so much as to shrink from death<sup>11</sup>.

O Lord, hear our prayer.

1. Romans 5:3, Romans 8:17-18, 1 Corinthians 12:26, 2 Corinthians 1:5-11
2. Hebrews 13:3, Colossians 4:18
3. Philippians 1:12-13
4. Philippians 1:14
5. Romans 15:5-6, 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5, 11-12
6. Philippians 3:10
7. Deuteronomy 31:8, Matthew 28:20, Hebrews 13:5
8. Psalm 23:4
9. Psalm 16:10
10. Hebrews 13:3
11. Revelation 12:11

Almighty God, who has taught us through your Son Jesus Christ that those who follow Him may be persecuted; strengthen, comfort and encourage all those who suffer harassment, violence, imprisonment and even death for being followers of Jesus. We pray for those who persecute your people; may their hearts be turned towards you through the faithful witness of those they persecute. Protect members of the families and church communities of those who are persecuted and bless the work and ministry of Release International and its partners as we support those who are suffering and seek to be a voice of persecuted Christians.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Steadfast Global: A Scottish Voice for Persecuted Christians**

[www.steadfastglobal.org](http://www.steadfastglobal.org)

<http://www.steadfastglobal.org/index.php/2011-10-24-20-42-08/praying-for-the-persecuted>

### **Praying for the Persecuted**

The immense value of prayer in the life of the Christian and of the Church cannot be understated! Jesus regularly set aside time to come before his Father in heaven to pray; Every Christian today has a responsibility to follow his example.

Time and again as visits are made to those who suffer for their faith, the #1 request made by them is that we pray for and with them. **Persecuted Christians ask us to pray for them because they sincerely believe in the power of intercession.** As one persecuted believer observed, *'When God's people pray, things happen'*.

We offer the following suggestions to help you pray for the Suffering Church:

1) Don't pray for persecution to end. The Bible teaches and Jesus emphasises, that persecution is here to stay ([John 16:33](#); [Rev. 6:9-11](#)), and that it is to be expected by every believer ([2 Tim. 3:12](#)).

2) Do pray generally for:

- The church in nations where persecution is prevalent.
- The Body of Christ, remembering that together we are one ([1 Cor. 12:12-27](#)).
- Mission organisations which serve persecuted Christians.
- The leadership in those lands ([1 Tim. 2:1-4](#)).
- Those who persecute God's people ([Matt. 5:44](#)).

3) Do pray specifically for those who are enduring persecution for their faith, remembering that they are real people, in real and devastating situations. Ask that they:

- Be given courage and strength to withstand their circumstances and remain faithful to their Lord and Saviour ([Rom. 8:28-39](#); [Luke 22:31,32](#)).
- Be given wisdom to understand the real reason for their suffering ([John 15:18-25](#)).
- Know the near presence of God and the comforting of the Holy Spirit ([Heb. 13:5](#); [Mat. 28:20](#)).
- Will experience profound joy in the midst of their suffering ([Matt. 5:11,12](#); [Rom. 5:3](#)).
- Will have peace over their loved ones and be able to hand them over to the Lord as they are in prison ([1 Pet. 5:7](#)).

4) Pray for the wives and children of imprisoned Christian men and also those who have become widows and orphans as a consequence of persecution. Often their suffering is more acute in that they not only have to deal with bereavement, but also the financial hardship that comes through losing the 'bread-winner'.

In conclusion, it must be emphasised that this list is by no means exhaustive. While all of the prayer points above are valid and important, we must also pray as the Spirit of God leads us; furthermore we must be willing to act upon His prompting. If this means that our actions must go beyond prayer (and invariably this is what happens!), then, so be it ([Matt. 25:35-40](#))!

## **Church of Scotland World Mission Council**

If One Suffers: World Mission Council's Report Concerning Christians Living in a Minority Situations

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/4632/minority\\_christian\\_report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/4632/minority_christian_report_2010.pdf)

### **Pray**

“More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.” (Tennyson)

Possibly the largest organised prayer effort is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP), which happens worldwide every November. It focuses above all on intercessory prayer and practical action on behalf of persecuted communities of the Christian faith, and also encourages prayer for the oppressors, the nations that promote persecution, and those who ignore it.

### **Inter-religious dialogue**

It is imperative that alongside any advocacy on behalf of Christians who face discrimination and persecution there is a corresponding respect for the religious traditions of other people. Many partner churches in minority situations are convinced that one of the greatest needs of the 21st century is for growing, constructive dialogue with the Muslim Community. Churches in the Middle East speak of the need for understanding and respect between all three Abrahamic faiths – Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Ill-considered advocacy that, often inadvertently, brands all members of a given faith community as persecutors can contribute to the polarisation which is part of the wider problem. It is important to eschew any appearance of a partisan approach which is concerned only for fellow-Christians and unmoved by discrimination or persecution being experienced by other religious communities. To stand clearly on the side of justice, it is necessary to advocate religious freedom for all. It is the furtherance of this principle which is the best weapon with which to fight the discrimination and persecution currently being experienced by minority Christian communities.

Let us not be silent

“The greatest sin of our time, is not the few who have destroyed, but the many who have remained silent”. (Martin Luther King)

The World Mission Council offers this report to the General Assembly in the hope and prayer that the Church of Scotland may – “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of those who are destitute. speak up and judge fairly, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” (Proverbs 31: 8-9) In prayerful and practical solidarity with those of the Body of Christ that suffer most, the whole Church will be strengthened, the world will be better served, and God will be glorified.

## **Interfaith prayers**

from the Book of Common Worship © 1995 Westminster John Knox Press(2)

These and some other resources can be found online on the website of the North Carolina Council of Churches:

[http://www.actsofffaith.org/Acts\\_of\\_Faith\\_Year\\_C/acts\\_faith\\_Year\\_C\\_Part\\_1/interfaith\\_worship\\_aids.html](http://www.actsofffaith.org/Acts_of_Faith_Year_C/acts_faith_Year_C_Part_1/interfaith_worship_aids.html)

### **For Jews**

Almighty God, you are the one true God,  
and have called forth people of faith  
in every time and place.

Your promises are sure and true.

We bless you for your covenant given to Abraham and Sarah,  
that you keep even now with the Jews.

We rejoice that you have brought us into covenant with you  
by the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
himself a Jew, nurtured in the faith of Israel.

We praise you that you are faithful to covenants made  
with us and Jewish brothers and sisters,  
that together we may serve your will,  
and come at last to your promised peace. Amen. [725]

### **For Muslims**

Eternal God,  
you are the one God to be worshiped by all,  
the one called Allah by your Muslim children,  
descendants of Abraham as we are.

Give us grace to hear your truth  
in the teachings of Mohammed, the prophet,  
and to show your love as disciples of Jesus Christ,  
that Christians and Muslims together  
may serve you in faith and friendship. Amen. [726]