

ANANIAS HOUSE

# PRAYER INITIATIVE



ananas  house



*"But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'" – Acts 9:15-16*

## OUR STORY

Ananias House was launched after its founder witnessed firsthand the devastating impact the conflict in the Middle Eastern region had on his homeland while also seeing the miraculous power of God in the lives of His children who were caught in the crossfire. Churches were left with few resources to care for the enormous number of people flooding their doors seeking refuge and truth.

As many Christians in the West wonder what they can do to stand with the persecuted Church, Ananias House provides an avenue through which they can engage in the work the Lord is doing in the greater Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through prayer, advocacy, and financial support, among other endeavors. Ananias House desires for God to be glorified in this region and works directly with local churches and Christian leaders through Biblical training and Gospel Centered resources.

Ananias House is driven to preserve the rich Christian heritage of Biblical times and, in the face of darkness and despair, proclaim the light and hope of Jesus Christ. This is done through meeting practical and tangible needs, knowing that it is often in the darkest times that the power of God is most evident.

While the last decade of conflict and instability in the Middle East has resulted in large numbers of people converting to Christianity, the region's churches have been gripped with significant challenges. Many have been displaced by war and violence. Our holistic approach to ministry includes equipping community leaders with vital and fundamental training, meeting the communities' basic needs, providing educational opportunities, and helping position the local church for sustainable growth.

*This is accomplished through these two arms of the ministry:*

### **Strategic Leadership Training**

Pastoral – Women – Counseling for Trauma Healing Equips pastors and leaders with theological training and leadership skills to strengthen the local church, as well as trauma counseling for healing.

### **Gospel Centered Resourcing**

Front Line Workers – Equipping Churches – Relief Supplies – Educational Support – Bible Printing, Empowering the local church to be a place of healing, restoration, and hope.

## PRAYER INITIATIVE

What can I do in the face of overwhelming suffering, persecution, and need? Pray. Start there. It isn't a little thing - prayer. It is a powerful thing in the hands of a mighty God. One of our frontline workers summed it up in saying, the battle is both spiritual and physical and the greatest weapon we have to wield in this battle is our prayers. We may not be able to come together physically or journey to the MENA region, but we can unite in prayer. We need your prayers, the global Body of Christ is strengthened by your prayers, and understanding this need and this power is the catalyst for our prayer initiative.

We invite you to journey with us in prayer over this next year as we enter into the story that God is unfolding in each of the 10 countries where Ananias House ministers. In each country we'll begin with the vision that the Lord has placed in the hearts of our field workers and share the story of the arrival of the Gospel and the birth of the Church. We will gain some understanding of how Christianity was impacted by Islam in each of these countries and get a glimpse of the current state of the Church. Finally, we will share with you what types of persecution the Church faces in each of these areas and how we are praising God in the midst of it all.

What do I pray for? This prayer initiative is divided into 4-week segments for each country and because we want to pray not only for, but with our ministry partners, each week we have incorporated prayers that our frontline workers have shared with us. These are the prayers that they lift up for their people and their countries. This is the way that they intercede. We are honored to amplify their voices and we ask you to join us each week in prayer. You are not limited to these prayers, but as a Church body, we have incredible strength when we are unified and of one accord.

The prayer initiative will end sharing specifics about our Strategic Leadership Training and Gospel Centered Resourcing, and how you can pray with and for us in these aspect of the ministry, as well.

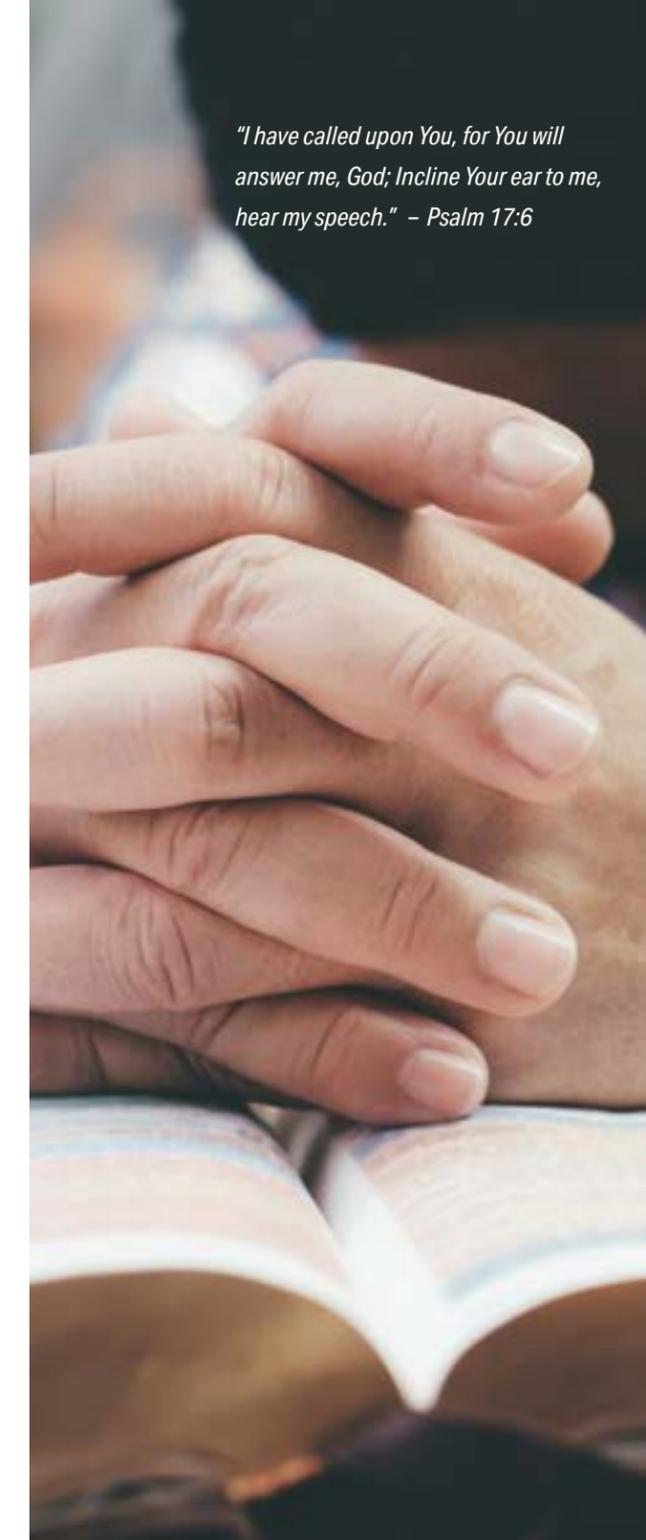
As you pray, be encouraged. God works within, but is not confined by geopolitical boundaries. Though the Church has been influenced by the rise and fall of empires, Christ is King, His kingdom is everlasting, and the gates of hell will not prevail against His Church. Thank you for spending this year with us. May your heart be turned toward God and your brothers and sisters in the MENA region as we partner in prayer.

This is how we fight our battles.

Together.

"The greatest weapon we have is our prayers"

*"I have called upon You, for You will answer me, God; Incline Your ear to me, hear my speech." – Psalm 17:6*





# Week One

*"So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."  
– Acts 9:17*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The voice, light, and truth of Christ will dispel the dark cloud of deception that covers the nation. The millions of voices proclaiming falsehoods over the nation will be turned to prayers of truth that glorify Jesus Christ.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN SYRIA

Historians often refer to the region of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel as the Levant and it is considered the cradle of Christianity.

The roots of the Gospel in Syria trace back to early New Testament days, when many disciples of Jesus fled Jerusalem to avoid the intense persecution led by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 7:54-8:2). Saul traveled to Damascus intent on purging the synagogues in the city of any who followed Christ. Instead, he had a conversion encounter with Jesus on his journey that would create a profound ripple effect for the Kingdom of God. In one of the most remarkable conversions in Scripture, Saul went from persecuting Jesus and his followers to witnessing for Jesus before the Gentiles and being a catalyst for spreading the Gospel throughout the region. Saul received support from faithful Ananias and other disciples in Damascus, and eventually his travels took him throughout the region and ultimately to Antioch, continuing to spread the Gospel. (Acts 9:1-31, Galatians 1:16-18, Acts 26:9-18). The New Testament confirms an active church community in Antioch, where Jesus' disciples were first called Christians (30-45AD).

Christianity spread rapidly across Syria over the next centuries and after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, Antioch became the Christian center of the eastern Roman Empire. Here, believers in the faith were taught, encouraged, and supported. History suggests a network of churches throughout modern Syria and Turkey were established within a few generations of the birth of the Church on Pentecost.

By 313, Christianity was legal within the Roman Empire and Christianization of the east accelerated. Up to 10% of the population were estimated as Christian in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Estimates increase to over 30% in the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century and possibly 60-70% by the end of the century. As the church grew in geographical size, population, and in age, other factors began to undermine its strength. Differing theological interpretations and varied cultural, ethnic, and political identities combined to produce deep divisions within the Church. The unfortunate result is that the church essentially divided. Although it is estimated that the majority of the inhabitants of Syria were Christian before the Arab Muslim conquest beginning in the 7th century, disunity and mistrust within the church played a role in the fall of the region.

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. – Galatians 3:28*

## PRAYERS

*Pray for unity and strength in the believers that they may stand firm for Christ under great pressure.*

*Pray that Ananias House can provide training seminars for evangelical pastors who continue to serve inside the country.*

*Pray that the Church is influenced by the Holy Spirit alone, and that it then influences the world for God's glory.*

*Pray the churches will put away a spirit of competition and cooperate with each other.*

# SYRIA



# Week Two

*"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or in dread of them, for the Lord your God is the One who is going with you. He will not desert you or abandon you." – Deuteronomy 31:6*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

In 636, Arab forces took control of Damascus permanently, which served as the capital of the Muslim world until Baghdad was founded in 762. Initially the vast differences between Islam and Christianity may not have been clear to Muslims or Christians. This changed under the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik (685-705). Arabization of Christians increased and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem was completed during Al-Malik's caliphate. As he sought to further elevate Islam, Muslim attitudes toward Christians and Jews declined, societal and financial pressure on Christians increased, and those who held their faith superficially saw conversion as attractive for tax relief and greater upward mobility in society.

Much of Islamic governance was based upon a covenant called the Pact of Umar. In addition to required payment of a jizya (tax), Christians under the pact faced additional restrictions in that they were not allowed to build or repair places of worship and they were prohibited from any public manifestation of religion. Freedom to convert moved in one direction only—from Christianity to Islam. The covenant required distinctive dress to differentiate non-Muslims from Muslims, as well as acts of deference from Christians toward Muslims. This established a social hierarchy where Muslims were dominant and Christians were outsiders. The resulting societal pressures coincide with an estimated increase in conversions to Islam. At the end of 750, over 90% of Syria and Palestine was estimated as Christian. By the 10th century, estimates place that value at 50%.

In the 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries, Syria was the target of multiple crusades which fanned the flames of conflict between Christians and Muslims and in 1124, the Christian cathedral in Aleppo was transformed into a mosque. Though voluntary Islamization of Syria had already begun, in some areas it was accelerated by threats, violence, and discrimination. By the 14<sup>th</sup> century some estimates suggest only 1 out of every 10 Syrians was Christian, while front line workers report the percentage was closer to 25% at the time of the Ottoman Turkish invasion. Constantinople fell to the Ottomans in 1453 and in 1516, Syria became part of the Turkish empire. Christians were targeted in major persecution events over the following centuries.

## RECENT HISTORY

WWI - Ottoman Empire collapses - 1920 Syria becomes French mandate

1946 granted independence - 1958 united with Egypt to form United Arab Republic

1961 separated from Egypt and Syrian Arab Republic re-established

1967 began dispute regarding control over Golan Heights region between Israel & Syria

In March, 2011, the spark of anti-government protests ignited a complex and destructive civil war. The unrest attracted foreign jihadist fighters including the radical Islamic State group (IS) which prompted additional intervention from the West, Russia, other Arab countries, and rebel groups. A complicated web of proxy fighting emerged as warring factions battled for control over regions of the country.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that God uses the decision of leaders for His glory and the good of the people of Syria.*

*Pray that God opens villages that have been closed so that they may receive the Gospel.*

*Pray that God plants a thriving church in every town and city.*

*Pray for a Bible to reach every person in Syria.*

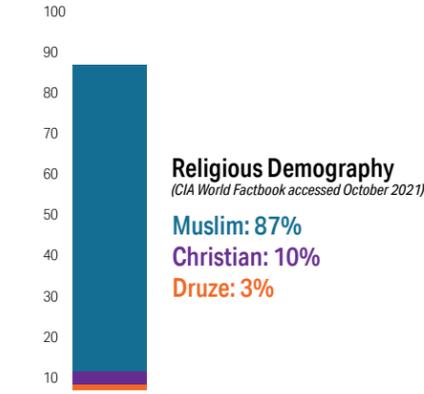
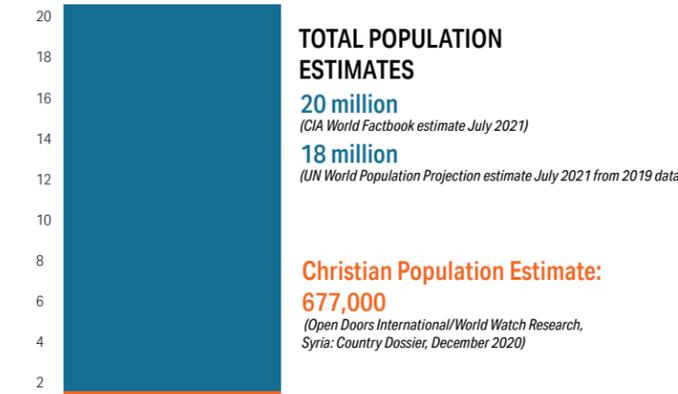
# SYRIA



# Week Three

*And He was saying to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. – Luke 10:2*

## THE CHURCH TODAY



March 15, 2021 marked ten years of civil war in Syria. This has significantly altered the demographics of Syria and the surrounding region. According to a September 2021 UN estimate, the death toll for the war was over 350,000 people - both civilians and combatants. Other estimates place the number over 600,000. With such a deadly and divisive war, young Syrian men do what they can to avoid mandatory military conscription. Many of those who have opportunity have fled. As of July 2021, there were 5.6 million registered Syrian refugees dispersed in Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, and North Africa. There are also an estimated 6.6 million internally displaced Syrians. Almost half of all Syrian refugees are children under the age of 18.

The conflict has caused one of the greatest humanitarian crises worldwide. Life sustaining infrastructure for necessities like water, sanitation, and electricity is damaged and service is inconsistent. Homes, hospitals, and schools have been destroyed. Children under the age of 10 have never known a time without war and many are not being formally educated. The economy has deteriorated. Access to basic necessities is limited. People are hungry. Health services have been decimated - there are shortages of medication, supplies, and quality medical care. This strain has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The UN reports that 13 million Syrians in the country need humanitarian aid and that 80-90% live below the poverty line. In the midst of this chaos, women, and young girls are particularly vulnerable to forced early marriage, rape, and sexual abuse.

Due to war and displacement, it remains difficult to accurately report numbers - while the U.S. government estimates that 10% of the population is Christian, reports suggest that it is under 4%. In areas previously controlled by radical Islamic groups, many churches were destroyed (at least 82) and entire communities emptied. Christian refugees from Syria are an estimated 700,000, suggesting that 50% have emigrated. Many more are seeking or would seek refuge elsewhere if they could. Many choose to stay to help their fellow Syrians and to witness the love of Christ in dark times. Christians churches launched humanitarian aid programs for displaced and vulnerable people, but the churches that provide food and supply relief cannot keep up with demand.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that God raises up laborers in the midst of the people who remain and brings back those who have fled. Currently, those who have fled are not allowed to return.*

*Pray that God builds up men and women leaders of prayer.*

*Pray that the Church in Syria effectively ministers to the frustrated hearts and humanitarian needs of the people.*

# SYRIA

# Week Four

*And the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not grasp it. – John 1:5*



## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Civil war, economic crisis, and the Covid-19 pandemic have increased tensions within Syria that fuel persecution of Christians and other minority groups. Christians face the most pressure - physical threats and violence, financial exploitation, and social persecution.

The government's highest aim seems to be maintaining social stability, so it monitors churches, discourages conversion from Islam to Christianity, and intervenes when there is a threat to the status quo. Christians have been detained and questioned under a variety of conditions and evangelical activities have been limited. Corruption is prevalent throughout all levels of society. Christians are often viewed as wealthy, so kidnapping and ransoming is a concern and a reality. In addition to this, Muslim background believers (MBBs) face added persecution as their families place extreme pressure on them to renounce their conversion because leaving Islam brings shame. The needs are great, and the weapon we have to fight the darkness is our prayers...together, as one body.

### *Join Us In* PRAISING GOD

- Praise God that there is a witness for his glory remaining in Syria.
- Praise God that many are losing faith in Islam and searching for a greater hope.
- Praise God that Jesus is appearing to many Muslims.
- Praise God that many believers are strong and courageous in sharing the gospel.
- Praise God that believers continue to follow Jesus and are prepared to die for him.
- Praise God that the church in Syria is growing.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for unity and strength in the believers that they may stand firm for Christ under great pressure.*

*Pray that the Church is influenced by the Holy Spirit alone, and that it then influences the world for God's glory.*

*Pray the churches will put away a spirit of competition and cooperate with each other. (put period at the end)*

*Pray that God raises up laborers in the midst of the people who remain and brings back those who have fled.*

*Pray that God builds up men and women leaders of prayer.*

# SYRIA



# Week One

*"These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." – John 16:33*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The church in Jordan will actively disciple and equip the next generation so they can successfully steward and lead the Body of Christ in Jordan to the praise of God's glory in God's timing.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN JORDAN

Jordan is considered part of the Holy Land. Scripture tells us that when John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River, the heavens were opened, the Spirit of God descended like a dove and came to rest upon Jesus, and a voice from heaven declared, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17). Jesus ministered, taught, and cast out demons in Jordan (Matthew 19:1; Matthew 8:28). People crossed the Jordan River to hear Jesus preach and to seek healing (Matthew 4:25). Jordan was forever influenced by Immanuel, God with us, and those who believed the Gospel.

The biblical history of Jordan continues to unfold as believers took refuge in Jordan after fleeing the persecution of the early church by Saul and Rome. Jesus warned of the fall of Jerusalem, entreating believers to flee the city when they saw it surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20-22). Christians did heed Jesus' warning and fled from the city to the town of Pella in Jordan before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. The Christian faith soon spread to other cities of the Decapolis and throughout Jordan.

The deserts of Jordan provided refuge for Christians fleeing persecution in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and by the 4<sup>th</sup> century Christianity had become the accepted religion of the region and began to grow rapidly. Archaeological evidence suggests a vast number of early churches throughout the country with clusters around Roman settlements and along the King's Highway. Jordan experienced a melding and coexistence of culture and religion due to its location between the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. Despite this, Arab Christians were present in Jordan and Christianity was the majority religion before the arrival of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

## PRAYERS

*Pray encouragement and refreshing for pastors and church leaders in Jordan as they seek to meet many needs.*

*Pray that God would raise up servant leaders of prayer and vision.*

*Pray for financial support of the spiritual work of ministry in addition to the relief work.*

# JORDAN



# Week Two

*"These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." Mark 16:15*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The rise of Islam in Jordan is closely tied to that of the other countries in the Levant. In 636, Muslims conquered Damascus and under Muslim rule, Christians and Jews were charged a jizya (tax) in return for protection and a degree of religious autonomy. Christianity in Jordan was still prominent through the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century - possibly 90% or more of Syria and Palestine remained Christian in the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century.

Jordan flourished through its proximity to Damascus while it served as the capitol of the Islamic empire until a powerful earthquake severely damaged the region in 749. Thousands were killed and many churches and other structures were destroyed. Shortly thereafter, the ruling Islamic dynasty changed and the capitol was shifted to Baghdad in 762. This isolated Jordan from the trade and traffic it had grown accustomed to and the prosperity of the region diminished. Historians believe that the Islamization of Jordan was a combination of Christians emigrating (due to socioeconomic and agricultural changes or in response to the earthquake or epidemics) while Arab tribes immigrated into the region. In 1090 Damascus and Jerusalem were seized and in 1096 the Crusades began. Christian crusaders reconquered Jerusalem, established a kingdom, and constructed a series of castle-like fortresses across Jordan to secure the route to the Holy City. The Muslim commander Saladin unified Egypt and Syria and recaptured Jerusalem in 1187.

It is difficult to quantify and track the decline of Christianity under Islam in the early centuries. Historians estimate that only 10% of the population of the Islamic Empire was Christian by the 10<sup>th</sup> century, but some estimates for Syria and Palestine are closer to 50%. Archaeological evidence suggests that although the language transitioned from Greek to Arabic, most Christian communities in Palestine and Jordan maintained their identity up until the Crusades and that Islamization truly began in the region after the conquest by Saladin in 1187. Mongolian forces brought violence and destruction into the Levant in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but were defeated by the Mamluks. In 1516 the Mamluks were defeated by Ottoman Turks and Jordan would remain under their rule for the next four hundred years.

## RECENT HISTORY

- End of WWI – Ottoman Empire collapses, Britain is given rule over large portions of the Middle East, and they separated the semi-autonomous Transjordan from Palestine in the early 1920s.
- 1946 - The region was renamed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan when it was granted its independence under King Emir Abdullah.
- 1951 - King Abdullah assassinated and succeeded by King Talal, who oversaw the formation of a new constitution that was ratified in January of 1952. King Hussein assumed the throne in 1953.
- 1967 - Jordan lost the West Bank to Israel in the Six Day War. King Hussein relinquished claims to the area in 1988 and signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994.
- 1999 - King Abdallah II (change to King Abdullah II) succeeded his father upon his death.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for wisdom on how to share the good news of Christ with people.*

*Pray for continued success of discipleship and leadership training.*

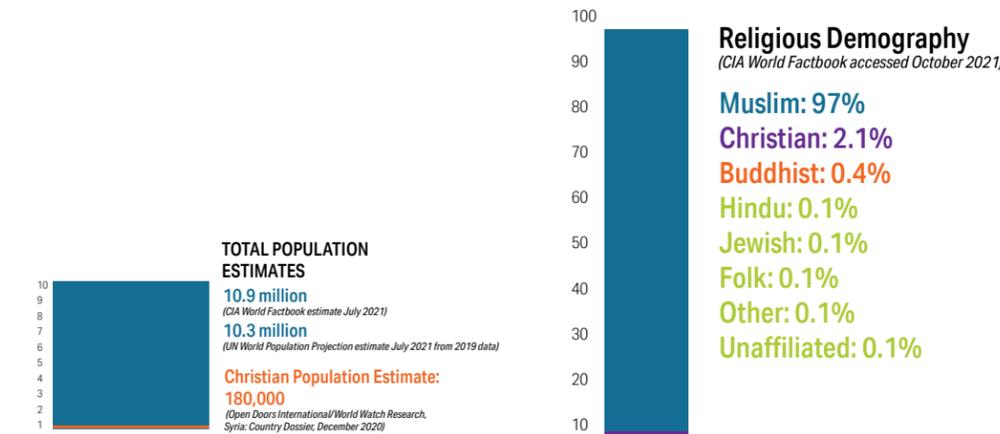
*Pray for spiritual revival in Jordan.*

# JORDAN

# Week Three

*“Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.” – 1 Corinthians 1:10*

## THE CHURCH TODAY



Most Christians in Jordan have a comparatively calm and stable environment in which to live and operate. Although the constitution names the state religion as Islam and declares the king must be a Muslim, it also safeguards, “the free exercise of all forms of worship and religious rites” as long as these are consistent with public order and morality. The king supports interfaith dialogue and tolerance and the government tolerates, includes, and to a degree supports recognized churches to a level that surpasses many other Arab nations. The heritage of the Church is rich and diverse, but fragmentation and disunity is an obstacle for missions, and for the overall Christian message.

Although Christians represent between 2-3% of the population in Jordan, their influence extends beyond their numbers. Christians in Jordan operate highly respected educational institutions throughout the country. They manage orphanages, elderly care facilities, hospitals, and community centers for widows. Christians are well represented in business, politics, the armed forces, education, arts, and medical fields. In addition to meeting the spiritual needs of their membership, Christians in Jordan also aim to meet the practical and humanitarian needs of fellow Jordanians and the refugee and migrant populations in their midst.

This latter truth is vital, as Jordan hosts millions of refugees from different regional conflicts in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria. More than 2 million registered Palestinian refugees live in Jordan as a result of the Arab-Israeli wars of 1948 and 1967. Many, but not all are now Jordanian citizens. Nearly 67,000 registered Iraqi refugees and over 650,000 registered Syrian refugees live in Jordan. There are ten Palestinian refugee camps and five Syrian refugee camps, and there is poverty and great need within these camps. There is also a substantial Egyptian migrant worker population in Jordan. Although there were 223,000 work permits assigned to Egyptian nationals at the end of 2019, experts believe that the total number in Jordan is closer to three times that. The significant refugee and migrant population, coupled with unrest in the surrounding region leads many to believe that Jordan has been used as a transit country for violent Islamic militants.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for partnership and unity amongst the church in Jordan.*

*Pray for religious freedoms to remain.*

*Pray for wisdom in the government as they lead under difficult conditions. May God use their decisions for His glory and the good of the Jordanian people.*

# JORDAN



# Week Four

*"Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment." – 1 John 4:7*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Christians with a Muslim background (MBBs) are the most persecuted for their faith. Although the constitution of Jordan stipulates that there shall be no discrimination based on religion, there is no legal mechanism for changing official religious affiliation from Islam to another religion. This prohibits MBBs from changing their religion on their electronic records or government documents.

MBBs also face extreme pressure from family and society to try to restore honor. They may be ostracized, discriminated against, and possibly face violence (even honor killings). Any member of society may file an apostasy complaint before the Sharia Public Prosecution which increases the pressure on converts to return to Islam. Female MBBs are particularly vulnerable, as they may face house arrest, isolations, beatings, sexual harassment and violence, or forced marriage. They may be faced with court ordered travel restrictions or bans.

As a whole, Christian women are vulnerable to sexual harassment or even rape for not being dressed like a Muslim lady. Sexual harassment is thought to bring shame upon the woman, so these instances are often not reported. In addition to these forms of discrimination, non-recognized Christian groups may be closely monitored or even harassed by public authorities, particularly if they are suspected of evangelism. Christians who actively evangelize or aid MBBs may be threatened or face challenges.

## Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for the growth of influence in the Christian church.
- Praise God for His provision of finances and facilities to use in serving the Jordanian people.
- Praise God for His love poured out in practical ways through the church.
- Praise God for the multiplication of churches and church growth during the pandemic.
- Praise God for the baptism of new believers.
- Praise God for His witness amongst the Jordanian people.
- Praise God for His witness amongst the refugee and migrant populations in Jordan.
- Praise God for intentional discipleship and fruit of that discipleship.
- Praise God for the youth that are actively engaged in church.
- Praise God for the community and sense of purpose He is building amongst those who felt lonely, forgotten, and hopeless.
- Praise God for good relationships between churches and the local authorities.
- Praise God for religious freedoms in Jordan.
- Praise God for religious freedoms in Jordan.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for protection over Christians in Jordan, particularly for those of Muslim background.*

*Pray for government recognition of those evangelical Christian denominations not yet recognized.*

*Pray that refugees in Jordan would know Christians by their love and be drawn to salvation.*



# Week One

*"make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." – Philippians 2:2*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

Christians from all denominations across Lebanon will fill stadiums and unite their many voices to bless God by singing worship and praise to Him in celebration of the gift of Jesus Christ and the joy He alone brings. May these praises be a witness to the Lebanese people and a watching world that glorify God and draw others to salvation.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN LEBANON

Lebanon is part of the cradle of Christianity and the larger region historians refer to as the Levant. The Gospel stories are rich with accounts of Jesus' time spent traveling and teaching in what is now southern Lebanon. It was known as Phoenicia when it became part of the Roman province of Syria in 64. It was there that a Syrophenician woman, a gentile, begged Jesus to cast a demon out of her daughter. This encounter set a precedent and foreshadowed further spread of the Gospel to and through women, foreigners, and gentiles. Believers who were fleeing the persecution that followed the martyrdom of Stephen (33-36 AD) evangelized parts of Phoenicia (Acts 11:19). And nearing the end of his third missionary journey (57 AD), the Apostle Paul and Luke sought out disciples in Tyre and stayed for seven days fellowshipping with local Christians (Acts 21:1-6).

Christianity quickly spread into many cities within Lebanon. Church tradition suggests that the Apostle Peter helped to start a church in Beirut and that he assigned Mark as the first Bishop of Byblos.

Christianity was slower to spread into the pagan heartland and mountains of Lebanon. The Maronite (Catholic) movement sought to reach these pagans with the Gospel. The movement began in Syria under the inspiration of a Christian monk named Maron in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries. Abraham of Cyrus, considered Maron's first disciple, led some of his companions into Lebanon where they founded a community. They successfully converted many pagans of the Lebanese Mountains to Christianity. Various waves of Maronites fled to the mountains of Lebanon, settled, and spread their faith amidst the native people in the mountains, coastal cities, and in the Bekaa valley. These communities grew as individuals became Christian and as others retreated from persecution elsewhere to settle in the region. Other Christian communities sought refuge in Lebanon as well.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for unity and true fellowship amongst the Christians in Lebanon, both individuals and denominations.*

*Pray for openness to one another and a desire to come together in worship and prayer in greater numbers so that joy is magnified, and the Church is strengthened.*

# LEBANON



# Week Two

*"For just as we have many parts in one body and all the body's parts do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually parts of one another." – Romans 12:4-5*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Lebanon was conquered by Muslim Arabs in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Between 635 and 637, other cities fell to the Arab invaders and Lebanon was ruled by four different Arab dynasties for roughly four hundred years (661-1098). The Maronites withdrew further into the mountains as tensions escalated and even carried out raids of resistance on the invaders. Pressure to Arabize increased with time, but those settled in the mountains were able to maintain a greater deal of autonomy. From 1516-1918, Lebanon was part of the Ottoman Empire.

In 1920 France was granted a mandate for Lebanon and Syria, and the State of Greater Lebanon was created from the provinces of Mount Lebanon, north Lebanon, south Lebanon, and the Bekaa valley. The Lebanese Constitution was approved in 1926 and includes articles outlining protection for religious freedoms. In 2012, unrest from Syria spread into Lebanon when Sunni Muslims and Alawites (supporters for the Assad regime) fought in Tripoli and Beirut. Conflict continued to flare along the border and within various cities for several years. Assassinations of key leaders and targeted bombings increased, further destabilizing the Lebanese government. Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war steadily poured into Lebanon. Over one million had registered by April 2014.

## RECENT HISTORY

October 2019: After a period of relative peace, frustration with economic stagnation and corruption in the Lebanese government prompted mass protests. Thousands of protestors took to the streets to demand an overhaul of the government and an end to rampant corruption. In response, the Prime Minister and cabinet resigned.

January 2020: A new cabinet was appointed, but protests continued because little changed to address the concerns of the people.

August 4, 2020: Over two thousand tons of poorly stored ammonium nitrate caused one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history at the Beirut seaport. The explosion killed at least 217 people, wounded 7,000 people, displaced over 300,000 people whose homes were destroyed, affected 163 public and private schools, impacted 56% of private businesses in the city, and rendered half of Beirut's healthcare centers nonfunctional. Infrastructure was extensively damaged. Lebanon's food supply was directly impacted because the country imports 85% of its food with the vast majority arriving through the port in Beirut.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for unity between the church in Lebanon and the global Church – that as one Body, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we would be able to meet physical and spiritual needs.*

*Pray for preservation of religious liberty.*

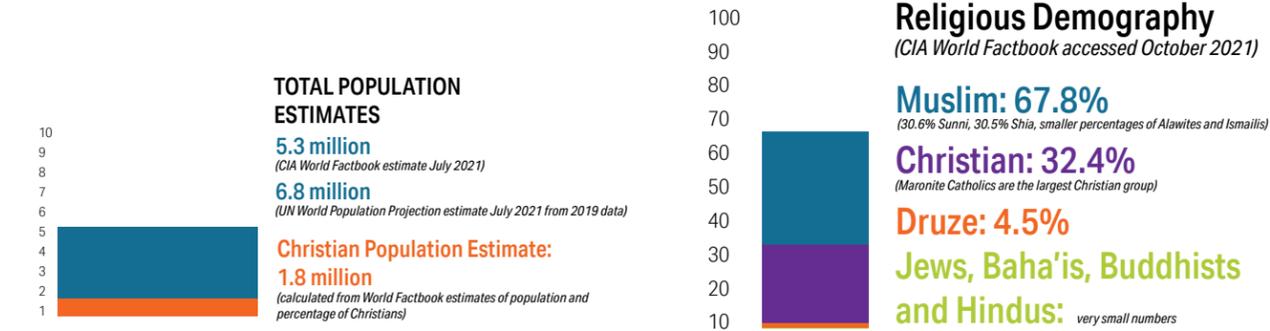
# LEBANON



# Week Three

*“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” – Romans 15:13*

## THE CHURCH TODAY



Lebanon has the largest percentage of Christians in the Middle East and is the only Arab country with a Christian head of state. The government is a highly secularized, parliamentary republic with 18 official religions built into the parliamentary system. Lebanon's freedom of religion has made it a primary destination for immigrants and displaced individuals fleeing persecution in the Middle East for decades. Refugees from Palestine and Iraq have fled to Lebanon through the years, and most recently upwards of 1.5 million Syrians as well.

The current situation in Lebanon is dire and continues to deteriorate. As of October 2021, the Lebanese pound had lost 90% of the value it held in 2019. The World Bank has called the situation one of the deepest depressions in modern history. Conditions are challenging for everyone, but refugees are experiencing higher levels of poverty and marginalization. Quality medical care is constrained by lack of funding, supply, facilities, and infrastructure, and even basic medicines are becoming difficult to find. Electricity rationing is the norm, and blackouts extend up to 22 hours per day at times. Fuel costs continue to rise, and regions of Lebanon are virtually uninhabitable in the winter without heat.

There has been a mass exodus of people from Lebanon since the blast in 2020 as people seek better circumstances elsewhere. According to front line workers, the youth of Lebanon has fled, and most of the population is under 18 or over 50. Since mid-June 2021, between 6,000 and 8,000 passports have been issued each working day in Lebanon. In the midst of this exodus of people, the needs are great. The global Church partners with various churches in Lebanon to provide much needed humanitarian aid and relief, but scarcity has fueled a degree of competition for and envy over resources, even within the Church. Schools and other ministries are struggling to keep operating due to lack of funding.

As one front line worker stated, “There is no good news but Christ.” Christians in Lebanon share in the struggles of the nation while seeking to remain a beacon of hope and a reminder of the God who never changes. The growth of the Church in Lebanon amongst refugee communities is encouraging.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for steadfast joy in Christ as so much of what provides earthly happiness has been stripped away.*

*Pray for Christians to maintain their integrity in the face of increasing challenges. May they influence the world rather than be influenced by it.*

# LEBANON



# Week Four

*"you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God." – 2 Corinthians 9:11*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Lebanon hosts thousands of refugees fleeing persecution from their home countries – many, though not nearly all of them, are Christians.

Though not as pronounced as in other countries, MBBs may face a variety of pressures from their families to renounce their conversion because leaving Islam brings shame.

Instability within the country coupled with the ongoing emigration of Christians could increase the influence of Islamic extremists and threaten religious freedoms.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for generosity, wisdom, and creative problem solving to replace competition for and envy over resources.*

*Pray for believers to stay within Lebanon to share the hope of the Gospel.*

## Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for His provision, protection, and providence.
- Praise God for the many new believers and new growth within the church.
- Praise God for the courage and faith of Christians within refugee communities who come together to worship openly.
- Praise God for the increasing diversity in the new churches and the unity that has arisen in the face of great need.
- Praise God for the mass distribution of Gospels in Lebanon.
- Praise God for the witness of many miracles during the Beirut blast.
- Praise God that internet service remains and is still affordable.



# Week One

*"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider one another as more important than yourselves;" – Philippians 2:3*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The church in Turkey will have recognizable and celebrated church buildings and bells that declare the glory of God, the presence of His people, and the Turkish heart of Christian worship to their communities.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN TURKEY

The church in Turkey was established and strengthened through missionary journeys in early New Testament days. Representatives from the region were in Jerusalem at Pentecost to witness the coming of the Holy Spirit, to hear Peter preach the gospel, and possibly to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2). Historians often refer to the region of western and central Turkey as Anatolia. Disciples of Jesus fled from Jerusalem to Antioch (Antakya) because of the persecution that arose after the martyrdom of Stephen. After his conversion, the Apostle Paul spent several years in his home town of Tarsus, likely preaching the gospel and establishing churches, before Barnabas sought him there to help support the church in Antioch. They stayed for a year as the church grew and in Antioch the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:19-26). The church in Antioch became a hub for missionary activity and communication, specifically spreading the gentile mission. Paul spent significant time in Ephesus, John is noted as ministering within Anatolia, and tradition places the Apostle Andrew in Byzantium (Istanbul) in 38 AD.

The church in Turkey suffered waves of persecution under various Roman leaders. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, is one of the earliest known Christian martyrs. Polycarp, who tradition says was personally discipled and appointed bishop of Smyrna by original apostles, was martyred in his old age for refusing to denounce Christ (c.155). Despite the intent of the Roman Empire, these persecutions fueled increased growth and boldness of Christian communities (Genesis 50:20).

Antioch became the Christian center of the eastern Roman Empire after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. The School of Antioch was established around 200 AD and produced significant theologians in centuries to follow. The city of Edessa (Urfa) became a successful missionary sending city itself, helping to spread the gospel into Mesopotamia (Iraq). The "Great Persecution" began under Diocletian in 303 but by 313 the Edict of Milan made the practice of Christianity legal within the Roman empire, and by 324 AD Constantine I united the empire and ended the era of persecution. He increased authority for bishops and engaged in an extensive church building campaign to accelerate Christian growth. The Megale Ekklesia (Great Church) was completed during his son's reign and sat on the location of today's Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. Christianization of the east accelerated. Up to 10% of the population of the Roman Empire was estimated as Christian by the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Estimates increase to over 30% in the mid 4<sup>th</sup> century and possibly 60-70% by the end of the century.

Turkey flourished as a center for theological writings and ideas. Antioch (Antakya) and Constantinople (Istanbul) were two of the five centers of Christianity (also including Jerusalem, Rome, and Alexandria). The first seven ecumenical councils of the church convened in Turkey from the 4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> century. Theologians from Antioch contributed key ideas during the controversies surrounding the nature of Christ in this time period. Theological divisions from Christological controversies combined with varied cultural, ethnic, and political identities to produce deep fractures in the Church of Asia Minor, which weakened it before the advance of Islam.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for the successful growth of new leaders within the church.*

*Pray for the global church to understand the importance of local leaders and to support their growth.*

# TURKEY



# Week Two

*"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." – Romans 10:17*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Though successful in capturing the Levant, North Africa, and much of Mesopotamia, Arab invaders were unable to take Constantinople despite many attempts beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Turkic tribes in the region converted to Islam around 1000 AD. As the Crusades unfolded, this further strained Muslim and Christian relationships. Christians were discriminated against in many ways and violence against Christians increased. In 1304, Turkish forces destroyed Ephesus - killing or deporting the Christians there. Social and financial pressures led many Christians to convert. The influence of Islam continued to increase in Anatolia in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and some historians estimate that by 1300 the majority of Anatolia was Muslim and that by the 16<sup>th</sup> the figure rose to 80%. Constantinople fell to Mehmet II and his armies in 1453 establishing Islamic rule over what is now modern Turkey.

In 1900, Christians accounted for more than 20% of Turkey's population. Between 1915 and 1917, however, Christians were massacred and deported on a large scale. Although Turkey does not accept the term genocide, more than 600,000 (some historians believe closer to 1.5 million) Armenians, many Greeks and Assyrians were killed by Turks in an event the Assyrians call Sayfo (year of the sword). Over 600,000 Armenians were deported and others fled. A component of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) which formed the Republic of Turkey forced the exchange of 1.5 million Greek Orthodox from Turkey for Turkish Muslims in Greece. This had a dramatic impact on the number of Christians in Turkey.

Although the treaty outlined protection of religious freedom for non-Muslim minorities, these rights haven't been fully granted. Minority citizens were illegally profiled by the state starting in the 1920s, Christians and Jews were placed under strict state control in 1936, a "wealth tax" was levied on non-Muslim minorities in 1942, and Christians had their assets and properties confiscated/repossessed/redistributed by state agencies in the 1970s and 1980s without rightful compensation. Turkish legislation based upon the Lausanne Treaty only recognizes four religions: Sunni Islam, Greek Orthodoxy, Armenian Apostolic, and Judaism.

## RECENT HISTORY

In 2014, Recep Tayyip Erdogan was elected Turkish president.

In July 2016, a coup attempt failed, the regime retaliated, thousands of people were arrested, thousands more were fired, and Turkish nationalism increased.

In 2017 constitutional reforms increased the length of time the president could remain in power and changed Turkey from a parliamentary democracy to a presidential democracy shifting power toward the president.

Turkey has become host to the largest refugee population in the world since the outbreak of civil war in Syria. There are approximately 3.7 million Syrian refugees in Turkey

## PRAYERS

*Pray for Turkish Christians to be confident in their faith in the face of hostility, prejudice, bias, and marginalization.*

*Pray for democracy and religious freedom.*

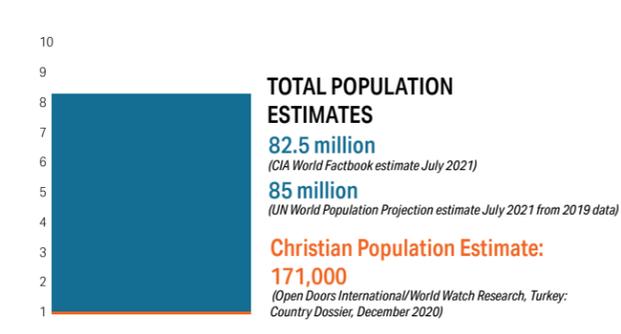
# TURKEY



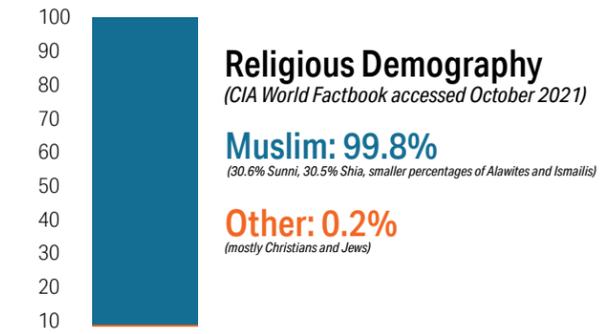
# Week Three

*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."*  
- Matthew 5:14

## THE CHURCH TODAY



**Christian Population Estimate:**  
**171,000**  
(Open Doors International/World Watch Research, Turkey: Country Dossier, December 2020)



Modern Turkey serves as a bridge between Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa, and history demonstrates that what God does within Turkey influences bordering nations and entire continents. Spiritual warfare and resistance in the country is intense. Despite its rich Christian history, Turkey is currently one of the least reached countries in the world with an estimated 0.2% Christian population.

The church in Turkey is viewed with great suspicion and often hostility by the majority of the population in part because Christians do not fit the preconceived notions of what it means to be Turkish. Christians are considered foreigners even when they are Turkish nationals because, for most people, to be a Turk is to be Muslim. Only two Christian denominations were recognized under the government's interpretation of the Lausanne Treaty of 1923 - the Greek Orthodox Church and the Armenian Orthodox Church. Other denominations have been forced to seek legal status by forming associations or foundations that are subject to approval from the government.

Protestant pastors began meeting together in the late 1980s to increase unity, solidarity, and partnership between their churches. In 2009, The Association of Protestant Churches was formed and there are now over 180 Protestant fellowships of various sizes across Turkey with an estimated 7,000 members. Fewer than twenty meet in historical churches, but many meet in offices, rented spaces, or homes. It is difficult to acquire premises for a church because of varied zoning laws, the prerogatives of mayors, and the attitude of the local people. Although the church is much more than a building, having a physical church with an address and visible signage is evidence to the community that the church is not a secret entity to be feared, but has a permanent presence in the community to be celebrated.

Existing laws in Turkey prohibit the training of Christian leaders in a formal educational setting. The seminaries of historic Christian communities were closed in the 1970s. Only unofficial training is permitted, so the church resorts to on-the-job training, seminars, sending students abroad, or utilizing the support of foreign clergy. Although the constitutional foundation of Turkey is secular, there has been an ongoing shift toward Islamic norms and values. The church faces great pressure and prejudice, and developments in the next few years are critical. In the midst of it all, God is restoring the Turkish church.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for successful discipleship and equipping of believers.*

*Pray for clearly identified church buildings for believers to worship in.*

# TURKEY



# Week Four

*"Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary." – Isaiah 40:31*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Religious nationalism and a deep resentment toward Christians is increasing in Turkey and with it the social pressure, hostility, and persecution of Christians has risen. While there have been instances of physical harm and property damage, much of the persecution is psychological, societal, and financial.

Religious affiliation is recorded on ID cards, which makes discrimination against Christian job applicants easy.

Christians are subjected to increased bureaucracy and legal challenges as evidenced by the difficulty in gaining legal status for Christian faith communities and places of worship.

Within the last two years there has been a stark increase in deporting or banning re-entry of foreign missionaries, some of whom had been ministering in the country for more than 30 years. Front line workers speak of 200-250 Christians being impacted including some foreign spouses and children of Turkish pastors.

Though not prohibited by law, conversion from Islam to Christianity is often regarded as a shame for the honor of family. MBBs in Turkey are considered traitors to the Turkish identity and face various degrees of retaliation and social isolation.

Hate speech has been directed toward Christians and Christian communities in the media.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for encouragement, protection, support, wisdom, and rest for existing leaders so that they remain steadfast in Turkey when it would be so much easier to leave.*

*Pray that the dividing wall of hostility against Christians would fall.*

*Pray that if leaders are deported, that many more would be sent.*

## Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God that the church in Turkey is missional - despite many pressures and challenges, they are discipling and sending people out.
- Praise God that the church has not retreated, but continues to advance the Gospel.
- Praise God for the unity and relationships being built in the Turkish church.

# Week One

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."  
– Colossians 3:16*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The church in Iraq will be a picture of the fullness of heaven - a multi-national church of local believers from every religious and tribal background that is united in Christ and under the authority of God's word, a bold and consistent light to the community, obedient to the call of discipleship, and successful in preparing the next generation for leadership so that God is glorified both now and into the future. The church will have buildings in which to gather, but also be the Church in their communities.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN IRAQ

Modern Iraq is included in the boundaries of ancient Mesopotamia, often called the cradle of civilization, and contains the ruins of the city of Babylon. The only city mentioned more frequently in the Bible than Babylon is Jerusalem. The three wise men from the east who followed the star and who bowed in worship before young Jesus may have been from the region that would become Iraq (Matthew 2:1-16). Mesopotamians present in Jerusalem at Pentecost witnessed the coming of the Holy Spirit, heard Peter preach the gospel, and possibly repented and were baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2).

Church traditions credit numerous individuals with carrying the Gospel to the east - St Thomas, Mar Addai, Mar Aggai, and Mar Mari are named as the first four patriarchs of the Church of the East. The Gospel arrived in Edessa (Urfa, Turkey) during the first century and the Christian community grew quickly. The evangelization of Mesopotamia was supported from Edessa and Christianity spread into Arbela (Erbil) and the region of Adiabene in modern Iraqi Kurdistan.

Few people in Mesopotamia could understand Greek in early centuries, so Syriac translations of the Bible were important for the spread of the Gospel. By the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the church had begun to develop an ecclesiastical structure and most of the Christians living in what is now Iraq were under Sassanid rule. Territories to the northwest were hotly contested between the Sassanids and the Romans. While the Edict of Milan and Constantine's favor brought greater freedom to Christians in the Roman Empire beginning in 313, it triggered intense persecution for Christians living in this region as the Sassanids became suspicious of the Christian population and their potential allegiance to Rome.

The Synod of Isaac was held in 410 to organize Christians in the empire into a single church, forming the Persian Church that would later become known as the Church of the East. The church adopted the creed of Nicea, but also the Christology of Nestorius. The third Council of Ephesus declared Nestorianism as heresy in 431, further alienating the Church of the East who turned their efforts towards evangelizing eastward into Iran, Afghanistan, central Asia, and even China. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century Christianity was still a minority in Sassanid Mesopotamia, but the Church of the East was thriving as the main Christian tradition and fully networked across the region with numerous schools, churches, and monasteries in operation.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for an ingathering of Christians in Iraq from various backgrounds. May they humbly welcome one another, seek the face of the Lord together, and be obedient to his promptings.*

*Pray that the church in Iraq would remain firmly rooted in the true Gospel and not turn to another, false gospel in order to please man. May the word of the Lord dwell richly within the church in Iraq. (Galatians 1:6-10; Colossians 3:16)*

*Pray for wisdom and discernment over pastors and leaders as they discern God's direction for their ministry.*

# IRAQ



# Week Two

*"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."*

– Romans 12:21

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Muslim Arab campaigns into Mesopotamia began in 634, but intensified after the conquest of the Levant. Archaeological and literary evidence suggests that the church continued to thrive in Iraq for a few centuries after the Muslim conquest. The Islamic capital moved from Damascus to Baghdad in 762 ushering in a period of cooperation between Muslims and Christians and the so called, "Golden Age of Islam". Some estimate that Christians constituted 40% of the Mesopotamian population under the leadership of Timothy I.

Proselytism of Muslims was strictly forbidden and Islamic authorities consistently punished apostasy. Financial and social pressures made conversion to Islam a tempting choice for Christians. The prominence of Christians in Muslim society began to decline and the population converted slowly as Christians were increasingly marginalized, subjected to heavy financial burdens, and even faced enslavement over the inability to pay taxes.

Around 1235, Mongolians began raids into Mesopotamia under the leadership of Hulagu Khan, destroying Christian monasteries around Mosul. Baghdad fell to the Mongols in 1258 and the country was plunged into turmoil. Over the following centuries, the church suffered through political unrest, raids, and persecution that decimated its population and structure.

## RECENT HISTORY

- Iraq came under British mandate in 1920 and was granted independence in 1932.
- The Baath Party assumed power in 1968 and emphasized the Arab character of Iraq.
- Saddam Hussein became president in 1979.
- The Iran-Iraq conflict (1980-1988) and the First Gulf War (1990-1991) took a heavy toll on the Christian population and many young people emigrated to avoid conscription.

In 2003, United States led coalition forces invaded Iraq to end the dictatorial reign of Saddam Hussein. At that time there were an estimated 1.5 million Christians in Iraq. Though the regime was toppled and Hussein was captured later that year, Iraq was destabilized, violence erupted across the country as sectarian militias battled for control of specific regions, and anti-Western and radical Islamic sentiments increased. Killings, kidnappings, and bombings became a common, if not daily, occurrence. Millions of Iraqis were internally displaced and millions more fled the country entirely.

Terror and violence intensified and spread with the advent of the Islamic State group (IS) who declared their own caliphate in June 2014. IS strengthened during the early years of the civil war in Syria, then spread quickly to control roughly one third of Iraq. They were brutal and showed no mercy to people of other religions. Christians in Baghdad experienced horrific violence. The number of refugees and internally displaced people increased. In 2017 the Iraqi Prime Minister announced that IS had been driven from Iraq, but they maintain presence and influence in the area.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for encouragement, steadfastness, and supernatural peace for believers so that they will remain in Iraq as a witness for God amongst the people there.*

*Pray for Christians in Iraq to not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)*

*Pray for healthy discipleship and spiritual growth connections between mature, biblically grounded, local believers and those who are newer to the faith.*

*Pray for revival amongst Iraqi Christians.*

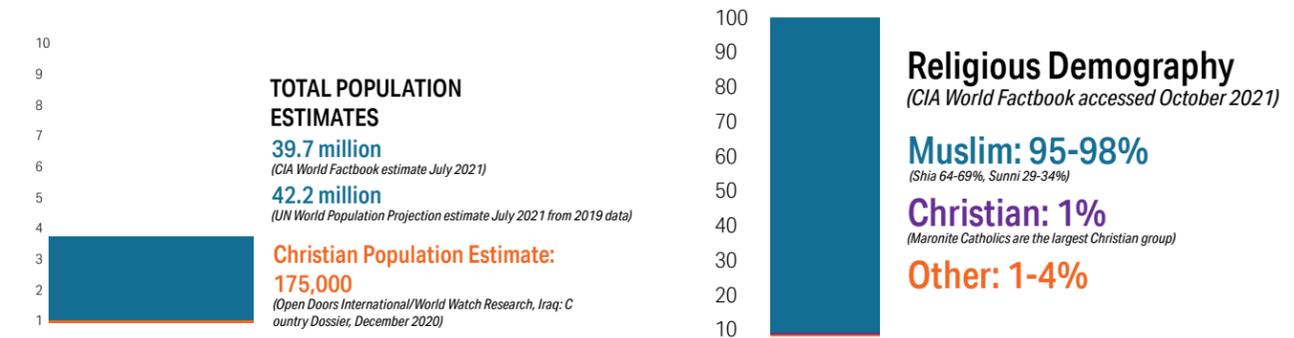
# IRAQ



# Week Three

*"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." – 1 Corinthians 12:13*

## THE CHURCH TODAY



The Iraqi people have been traumatized by decades of violence and unrest. The government remains divided, the economy is struggling, infrastructure has been destroyed, corruption is rampant, the security situation is fragile, and people fear the return of IS and an increase in sectarian violence. Societal unrest has prompted major demonstrations against the government. Christians are particularly vulnerable under these conditions.

As of September 2021, nearly 1.2 million Iraqis remain internally displaced, predominantly in the IKR. The region also hosts over 250,000 Syrian refugees and more than 40,000 refugees of other nationalities. About one third of the refugees and around 40% of the internally displaced Iraqis live in camps. Nearly five million Iraqis have returned home - many to destruction and a lack of basic necessities. People are anxious, depressed, and disconnected. Over 4 million people need humanitarian assistance.

According to the 2020 Report on International Religious Freedom, nearly 70% of Iraq's Christians are Chaldean Catholics and nearly 20% are Assyrian Church of the East. There are approximately 2,000 registered members of evangelical Christian churches in the IKR, while an unknown number of MBBs and Yazidi background believers (YBBs) practice secretly. Front line workers estimate there could be 300-500 MBBs and YBBs, but confess that the numbers are not obvious. While there are a few traditional churches in Northern Federal Iraq and some have been rebuilt in Mosul, there is no formal evangelical community in the region. Christians fled the Nineveh plains during IS occupation and many never returned.

The Iraqi people are divided over many things and this permeates the Iraqi church, as well. Traditional churches and evangelical churches sometimes view one another as competition rather than co-laborers. Though the IKR is an open place for the Gospel, it is also ripe for evil and the spread of falsehood. Syncretism is a threat and some seem to be preaching another gospel. In these challenging circumstances, many Muslims have become disillusioned with Islam and more open to hearing the hope of Christ. The church continues to minister to the humanitarian and spiritual needs of the people and strategically invests in the next generation of leaders.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for the Syrian refugee house churches to flourish.*

*Pray for the development of the next generation of pastors and leaders within Iraq - may concern for the health of the church supersede individual or denominational pride.*

*Pray for unity in Christ amongst Kurdish and Syrian believers. May they be awakened to their love for one another and joyfully worship together.*

# IRAQ



# Week Four

*"I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another." – John 13:34-35*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

The Iraqi Constitution of 2005 established Islam as the state religion, as the foundation source of legislation, and protected the "Islamic identity" of the Iraqi people. It guaranteed the freedom of religious belief and practice for Christians, Yazidis, and Mandaean. Beyond this, personal status laws and regulations prohibit the conversion of Muslims to other religions and women registered as Muslim are not permitted to marry non-Muslims.

Christians used to feel tolerated in Iraq, but societal pressure has increased. The church in Iraq faces persecution, discrimination, and intolerance from militant Islamic groups and non-Christian leaders, plus discrimination from government authorities. Those who move from Orthodox to Evangelical congregations may be isolated, refused a marriage ceremony, or lose their jobs.

In south and central Iraq, Christians keep their faith quiet to avoid being harassed, discriminated against, or targeted. Christians can be charged with blasphemy if they are suspected of evangelizing Muslims. Christians and Christian institutions have received threats of violence and kidnapping, and violent Islamic groups are known to target Christians and other religious minorities in this way.

## Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for the openness to Christianity in the Kurdish region of Iraq.
- Praise God for the leaders who are being discipled and equipped in Iraq.
- Praise God for the Muslims and Yazidis who are coming to faith in Christ.
- Praise God for those who are intentionally pursuing the unity and health of the church in Iraq.
- Praise God for the hunger for truth amongst the Iraqi people. Those from conservative and even radical Islamic backgrounds are being drawn nearer by the hope of Christ.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that the Islamic State and other radical Islamist groups would not return to power.*

*Pray that the evangelical church and traditional church in Iraq will build genuine relationships with one another so that they may have true fellowship and be a credible witness to the love of Christ to a watching world.  
(John 13:34-35; John 17:20-23)*

*Pray for healing from the trauma of decades of violence and instability - may the church be a light and a leader in trauma healing and a guiding force toward peace.*

# IRAQ



# Week One

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

– Romans 12:2

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The Egyptian church will be fruitful in identifying, discipling, equipping, and multiplying church leaders who glorify God and strengthen the Body of Christ.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN EGYPT

Egypt has a rich biblical history. Jesus himself spent time in Egypt as a young child with his parents. Joseph heeded the warning of an angel of the Lord and fled to Egypt with Jesus and Mary to escape a murderous plot of Herod. Egyptians present in Jerusalem at Pentecost witnessed the coming of the Holy Spirit, heard Peter preach the gospel, and possibly repented and were baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2). A Jew named Apollos from Alexandria taught about Jesus in Ephesus and later in Achaia. (Acts 18:24-28).

Christianity reached Alexandria in Egypt by the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Church tradition and the writings of Eusebius name Mark as the founder of the church in Egypt before his martyrdom (c.68 AD). As the church flourished in the city, Alexandria became a highly influential seat of theological learning and discipleship. Christian theology was heavily shaped by North Africa, from the schools of Alexandria and Carthage.

The spread of Christianity in rural Egypt in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century was expedited by the translation of books of the Bible into several dialects of the Egyptian (Coptic) language. These translations allowed Egyptians to hear the Bible read in a language they could understand and respond to. As a result, there was a mass conversion of Egyptians to Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century - their numbers tripled or possibly quadrupled, particularly amongst the Coptic-speaking villagers in the Nile valley. The Great Persecution that began under Diocletian in 303 was severe in Egypt, but with the issuance of the edict of Milan in 313, Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire.

In 367 AD, the annual Easter Festal letter penned by Bishop Athanasius of Alexandria to the churches and monasteries in his jurisdiction included an explanation of what the Old and New Testaments should include. It listed the 27 books of the New Testament that we use today and has been considered the first authoritative statement on the canon of the New Testament. The Church split over interpretations of the nature of Christ and the decision of the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). Between language differences, the split in the church and subsequent suppression from Byzantine emperors, and the Byzantine tax burden, there was little loyalty between Constantinople and Egypt. This left it primed for invasion.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for revival in the Egyptian church that inspires Christians to go out into the community in evangelism and discipleship. May people no longer be satisfied with simply attending church, but be moved to share the Gospel and study the Bible.*

*Pray for solid, biblical teaching that affects change within Egypt. May there be a renewed passion for the Word of God. (Colossians 3:16)*

# EGYPT



# Week Two

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."*

– Colossians 3:16

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

Egypt was conquered by Sassanids in 619, then retaken by the Byzantines for a period before Arab invaders captured Alexandria in 641. They established their capital at Fustat, which evolved into Cairo over centuries. The use of Coptic remained the language of the liturgy, but in other facets of life its use diminished over time. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century Arabic was the dominant language amongst all people in Egypt.

In the 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century, application of the "Pact of Umar" increased to marginalize Christianity and elevate Islam. One aspect of the pact was a restriction on the building of churches. In Egypt, this led to increased investment in monasteries. Despite this, the challenges imposed by the Pact, coupled with waves of intense anti-Christian sentiment, seem to have encouraged conversion to Islam. Christians were the majority in Egypt until the early 11<sup>th</sup> century, but in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries many Christians in the countryside of Egypt became Muslim.

Mistrust of Christians had arisen partially in response to the Crusades and destruction wrought by the Mongolian invasion. The Mongolians were generally ruthless, but showed some partnership, favor, and mercy toward Christians as they advanced. This did not last long. The Mamluks were pivotal in stopping the Mongolian advance, and seeds of deep enmity were planted. The Sultan ordered all churches closed in 1301 due to riots, unrest, and fear. The church was severely marginalized from this point into the conquest of Egypt by the Ottomans in 1517.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Roman Catholic Church entered Egypt, followed by the Anglicans in 1819 and Presbyterians in 1854. Britain took control of Egypt's government in 1882. Egypt acquired full sovereignty in 1952.

## RECENT HISTORY

Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt culminated in the removal of President Hosni Mubarak in 2011. National leadership went through a variety of transitions including the election and rapid ousting of Mohamed Morsi, who had close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013, and an increase in violence against Christians and churches followed this change. The threat of the Islamic State drove Christians from their homes in northern Sinai and the group claimed multiple violent acts including the beheading of Coptic laborers in Libya. Church leadership aided in drafting the constitution that voters approved in 2014 and Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was elected president in the same year. Since his election, there have been extreme measures against the Muslim Brotherhood and it has been labeled as a terrorist organization by the Egyptian government. Al-Sisi was reelected in 2018 with 97% of the votes.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for revival in the Egyptian church that inspires Christians to go out into the community in evangelism and discipleship. May people no longer be satisfied with simply attending church, but be moved to share the Gospel and study the Bible.*

*Pray for solid, biblical teaching that affects change within Egypt. May there be a renewed passion for the Word of God. (Colossians 3:16)*

# EGYPT

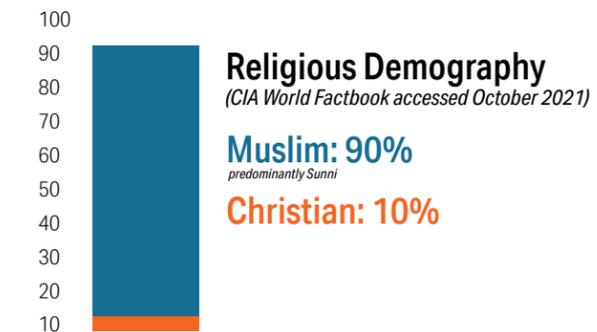
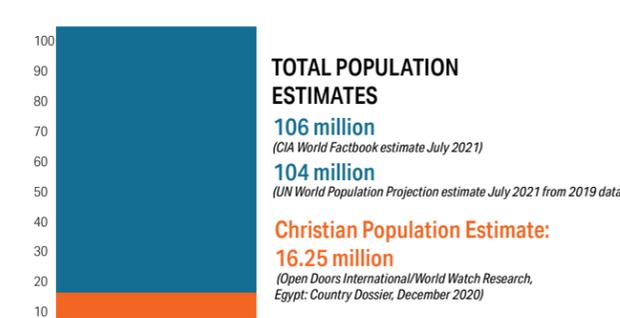


# Week Three

*"but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, but with gentleness and respect"*

— 1 Peter 3:25

## THE CHURCH TODAY



Egypt is the most populous country in the Arab world. The Christian community in Egypt is the largest in the MENA region with an estimated 16-17 million. According to front line workers, only 3-4 million of those Christians attend church and the number of those who are actively engaged in discipleship and evangelism drops to the thousands.

Emigration of Christians from Egypt began in the 1950s and peaked after 2011 causing some communities to lose significant numbers. This has, however, created an international network of support. At times there has been a sense of competition between denominations, but cooperation and unity has increased.

The Coptic Orthodox Church accounts for 90% of Egypt's Christians. It operates about 30 monasteries with over 1,600 monks and various educational outreach programs. The Coptic Evangelical Church and Coptic Roman Catholic Church are the other main denominations. It is difficult to quantify the number of evangelical communities, but there are 17 types of evangelical churches and their membership is growing. Some Christians gather for worship in church buildings, but there has been great growth in house churches. In order to foster connection and support for these faith communities, those who evangelize bring leaders from the nearest church with them on their visits and try to facilitate connections between nearby house churches.

There are Christians throughout the country, but their numbers are more concentrated in the southern part of Egypt and in major cities like Cairo and Alexandria. Front line workers have noticed an increase in marital struggles within the church and families are seeking court intervention in much higher numbers. They hope to equip leaders with the biblical tools for counseling couples and to model a healthy family dynamic for those they minister to.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that leadership training is fruitful and multiplies other leaders.*

*Pray for successful training of leaders to counsel on marital challenges and for resulting healing of family units within Egypt.*

*Pray that front line workers and their families would model a true picture of Christ and the Church.*

# EGYPT



# Week Four

*"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."*

– Galatians 2:20

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

The Egyptian Constitution establishes Islam as the state religion with principles of Islamic Sharia as the primary source of legislation. It also states that "freedom of belief is absolute." The presidential institution speaks positively about the Christian community and Front line workers are encouraged by the increase in freedoms for the church since the revolution, but Christians continue to experience persecution and marginalization in a variety of ways.

This is evident in that it is incredibly difficult for Christians to gain approval to restore existing places of worship or build new places of worship. They face communal pressures, occasional mob violence, and extensive government restrictions on licenses and permitting. Construction of churches is subject to a more stringent government scrutiny than the construction or renewal of mosques. In addition to this, Christians (particularly girls) are targeted for kidnapping and extortion and some are forced to marry Muslim men.

Religious affiliation is required on Egyptian ID cards and applicants can choose from three, "heavenly religions" (Islam, Christianity and Judaism). The problem is that children of Christian converts are automatically registered as Muslim. ID cards are required for engagement in civil society activities like voting, travel, obtaining a job, accessing post-secondary education, and more, and because of this Christians face discrimination in employment. It is nearly impossible to change affiliation from "Muslim" to another faith on state ID cards due to Sharia prohibition of apostasy. This is particularly challenging for Muslim-born individuals who convert.

Believers from a Muslim background bear the greatest weight of persecution. Family members view apostasy as shameful and may retaliate with violence, arrest, restriction of freedoms, removal of travel documents, legal intervention, forced marriage, separation from children, and more. Domestic violence is not criminalized by law unless it is, "considered to be beyond 'the accepted limits of discipline decided by the judge' and 'if the injuries are apparent.'" This gives license to various forms of domestic abuse without any retaliation on the abuser or protection for the victim.

## Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for an increase in leadership among the youth of Egypt who are truly burdened for the Lord.
- Praise God for an increase in freedom for evangelization and discipleship across Egypt.
- Praise God for the continued growth and success of family ministry initiatives.
- Praise God for the community being developed amongst Christians in Egypt.

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## PRAYERS

*Pray that leadership training is fruitful and multiplies other leaders.*

*Pray for successful training of leaders to counsel on marital challenges and for resulting healing of family units within Egypt.*

*Pray that front line workers and their families would model a true picture of Christ and the Church.*

# EGYPT



# Week One

*"I will raise my eyes to the mountains; From where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth." – Psalm 121:1-2*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

Within five years, there will be a healthy, functioning, unified, church in every governorate of Tunisia so that believers across the country would be able to fellowship with other believers and that the credible witness of the church would cover the land.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN TUNISIA

Christianity arrived in Tunisia by the early 2nd century while it was a Roman province. Christians who refused to sacrifice to Roman gods and swear allegiance to the emperor were considered traitors and some were martyred. Early texts recounting some of these experiences can be found in the Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs and The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicity. Both documents share tragic stories of believers who were executed because they refused to deny their faith in Jesus Christ.

By the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, what is now known as Tunisia was the most Christianized part of the western Roman Empire. Born in Carthage in 150, Tertullian (150-c230) was one of a generation of Christian apologists. He is considered the first western theologian and is the first Christian known for his Latin writing. Tertullian wrote prolifically in defense of the Christian faith, witnessing before pagans, challenging the Romans, and encouraging the church. It was Tertullian who wrote, "the blood of Christians is seed" which is often modified to, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." He also introduced the term "Trinity" to help Christians better understand the nature of God as revealed in the New Testament. Cyprian (200-258), born a pagan likely of Berber descent, converted to Christianity and quickly became a bishop of Carthage, influential writer, and thought leader. He wrote *On the Unity of the Catholic Church* and emphasized the importance of one true Church, united. Cyprian was the first bishop martyred in North Africa.

Though Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire in 313 priming it for growth, the North African church was divided and weakened by the Donatist schism - at its root a question of church purity, whether and how former apostates could serve as bishops. At the turn of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, nearly every North African city had both a Donatist and a catholic bishop - both sides genuinely believed they were the "true church" and worked against the other. Donatism was declared heresy by Emperor Honorius in 410, but disunity was rampant. The third Council of Carthage (397) ratified the New Testament canon in Tunisia affirming the decision of the Council of Hippo in 393.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for unity amongst the Christian faith communities in Tunisia to rise from within.*

*Pray for encouragement, steadfastness, creativity, clarity of communication, humility, love, protection, wisdom, favor, and success for those who are working toward unifying Tunisian churches on a national level.*

*Pray for biblical conflict resolution to become the norm within Tunisian churches. May the model of conflict resolution within the church glorify God, strengthen the Body, and be a credible witness to a watching world.*

# TUNISIA

# Week Two

*"For just as the body is one and yet has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ." – 1 Corinthians 12:12*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

After the Arabs conquered Egypt in 641, they set their sights on North Africa. They raided Tunisia several times after 647 then founded the city of Kairouan, which served as a base camp for the Arab offensive on North Africa - the oldest one in the Maghreb. It was the Islamic capital of the region and remains a principal holy city.

At the time of the Arab Muslim invasion, some historians suggest that many of the native Amazigh (Berber) people along the coastlands had converted to Christianity in some form. They were critical to the resistance against the invasion, but the invaders eventually prevailed. The Arabs defeated the Byzantines in the Battle of Carthage in 698 placing most of North Africa under their control. They sacked and destroyed the city to prevent reconquest and built a nearby camp from which to operate. The camp outside of Carthage was so successful that they built the city of Tunis. While Tunis was almost entirely Muslim, what remained and was restored of Carthage was mostly Christian.

The advancement of Islam into North Africa was also fueled by the fact that the Bible was not translated into Punic or Berber dialects at the time. This meant that many people could not engage with scripture in their own language, so Christianity did not spread as widely or as deeply in the native population. By the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of people in North Africa had converted to Islam. Christianity and Judaism were allowed to coexist with Islam, but Christians and Jews were increasingly marginalized. Over subsequent centuries the presence of Christianity slowly succumbed to the societal pressures of Arabization and Islamization and had dwindled to near nothing by the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The first Ottoman conquest of Tunis took place in 1534, and by 1574 Tunisia was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire.

## RECENT HISTORY

The Roman Catholic and Reformed Protestant churches both engaged in evangelism and church building in Tunisia. In 1964 the Vatican and the new Tunisian government signed an agreement called the Modus Vivendi, which allowed the Catholic Church to remain in the country in exchange for land, buildings, and an official renouncement of proselytism. Seven churches remained open for worship. The Protestant Church, however, was not bound by this type of formal limitation.

Tunisia was the birthplace of the pro-democratic Arab Spring uprisings that swept through much of the MENA region in challenge of entrenched authoritarian regimes. It began in December 2010 when a young Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire in protest of his repeated mistreatment by local authorities who demanded bribes and confiscated his merchandise, thereby crippling his ability to support his family. His story of hopelessness and frustration in the face of injustice and economic hardship resonated with so many Tunisians that demonstrations and protests were sparked throughout the country, and later across the Arab world. After more than two years of debate, negotiations, and a period of crisis, the Arab Spring ushered in democracy for Tunisia which has been successfully maintained through periods of trial and difficulty.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for healing and preservation of healthy relationships between church leaders and members.*

*Pray for unity, communication, and fellowship between Tunisian churches and Western churches. May the global Body of Christ be united, rejoice together, mourn together, and strengthen one another.*

*Pray that God protects and blesses those believers meeting in homes - may they be shielded from opposition from police and successfully transition to open churches.*

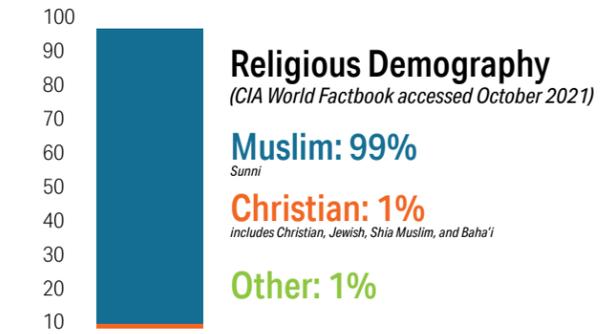
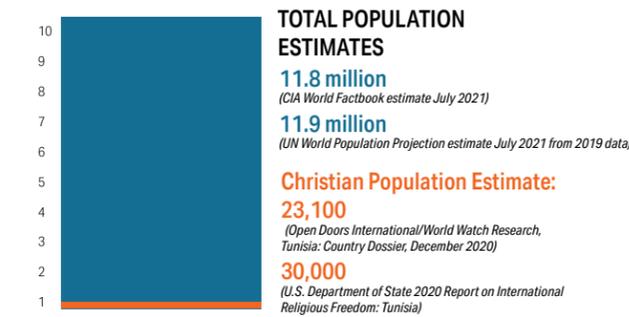
# TUNISIA



# Week Three

*"For You bless the righteous person, Lord, You surround him with favor as with a shield." – Psalm 5:12*

## THE CHURCH TODAY



The 2014 constitution of Tunisia established Islam as the State religion and stipulates the president must be Muslim. The overwhelming majority of Tunisians are Sunni Muslims. The majority of Christians in Tunisia today are expatriates. The indigenous church has been growing since the 1990s, but Christianity is viewed as foreign. MBBs in Tunisia are not officially recognized and do not have officially recognized church buildings.

Although the roots of Christianity in Tunisia are ancient, the indigenous church in the country today is young. The average age of indigenous church membership may be 22-23 years. The church is also young in terms of the number of years it has been meeting. The first “open” indigenous church began gathering in the 2000s as a conglomeration of house churches meeting in an expatriate church facility. This has grown to 10-12 open churches meeting in expatriate church facilities in cities across the country. In addition to these communities, there are numerous churches meeting in homes or buildings which are truly driving growth and expansion.

The largest number of believers are found in the capital of Tunis, but also in other cities and pinpoints all over the country. While there are an estimated 1,300 - 1,500 indigenous believers, it is possible that there are an additional 3-4,000 quietly distributed across the country positioned for an ingathering. Tunisian Christians pray for a flourishing, healthy, open, Arab church within every governorate so that believers can access a church and be with other believers within a reasonable distance from their homes.

Overall, the Christian community in Tunisia - both expatriate and local - enjoys relative freedom, provided they avoid activities that could be construed as proselytism. This, however, is greatly dependent upon the interpretation and application of the constitution, which is subject to change under different government leadership. There is currently uncertainty and instability within the government, which is a breeding ground for persecution of Christians.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for house churches to develop independence from western workers.*

*Pray for stability and cohesion within the government as well as preservation of the freedom of religion clauses in the constitution.*

*Pray for financial provision for ongoing ministry activities.*

*Pray for unity in the Body of Christ, which is critical to its witness and strength.*

# TUNISIA



# Week Four

*"These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." – John 16:33*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

The 2014 Tunisian constitution obligates the state to guarantee freedom of conscience and religion and to protect the exercise of religious practices, provided such practices are consistent with public order. It separates Tunisian citizenship from religious affiliation. In practice, however, it is assumed that every Tunisian is Muslim when registering civil rights of passage (birth, and marriage, for instance), conversion from Islam to Christianity is not recognized, and proselytism is effectively banned.

The Christian community has a positive relationship with the government at the federal level, but this doesn't always translate to local entities across the country. Individual governorates and police captains engage with the Christian community differently. Tunisian security services monitor Christian communities. Many Christians have been detained and questioned about their activities over accusations of proselytization. Some have been threatened. Christians meeting in house churches are more likely to face opposition from local communities and authorities.

Tunisian believers from a Muslim background face significant pressure from society and from family. To be Tunisian is equated with being Muslim. Christianity is viewed as foreign and western. Apostasy is considered treasonous and there have been media campaigns portraying converts as a menace that threatens the fabric and stability of society. Conversion is thought to bring shame upon the family and reactions can vary. For women this could include beatings, exclusion/expulsion from home, house arrest, death threats, rape, divorce, removal of contact with children, withdrawal of financial support, or forced marriage, disinheritance, or forced marriage. Male converts may lose their jobs or be denied promotions, face exclusion from community networks, suffer violence, be detained and interrogated by the police. This creates added pressure as a man's family becomes vulnerable, as well. While fleeing to the city may offer an opportunity to live more freely, many converts who do this can no longer return home.

Christian women and girls are vulnerable to sexual harassment, assault, and violence.

### *Join Us In* PRAISING GOD

- Praise God that church participation has remained steady even in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic and periods of complete shutdowns.
- Praise God for the growth in the house churches.
- Praise God for multiplying churches even through disunity.
- Praise God for the intentional development of new believers through strategic discipleship.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that a spirit of competition for resources would be broken and replaced with a sense of shared purpose and collaboration.*

*Pray encouragement, rest, wisdom, and God's strength for pastors as they serve and love their communities in time of overwhelming need.*

*Pray for an ingathering of those Tunisian believers scattered and isolated across the country.*

*Pray for continued growth in and acceptance of the church in Tunisia.*



# Week One

*"so that with one purpose and on voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 15:6*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The church of Morocco will be united, strongly rooted in the Word of God, active in discipleship and evangelism, growing in new areas across the country, fruitful, and free to worship publicly.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN ALGERIA

Much of the early Christian history of Algeria and Tunisia is shared. The Gospel took root in Algeria by the early 2nd century while it was a Roman province known as Africa Proconsularis with Carthage (near Tunis) as its capital. The church grew rapidly and many Amazigh (Berbers) along the coast became Christians. In some ways, Christianity became associated with resistance to the Roman Empire. The church suffered persecution under Diocletian, then was so divided and weakened by the Donatist schism that at the turn of the 5th century, nearly every North African city had both a Donatist and a catholic bishop. When Christianity became associated with the Empire after Constantine's edict of Milan (313), disunity, in-fighting, and oppressive behaviors tarnished the witness of the church amongst the Berber people.

Church father Augustine (354-430) was born in Thagaste (Souk Ahras, Algeria) to a pagan father and Christian mother who prayed fervently for her son's salvation. Scholars generally agree that Augustine and his family were Berbers. Though his path to Christianity meandered, Augustine would go on to become one of the most influential Christians of all time. He became bishop of Hippo and guided the church through various controversies. His successful campaign against Donatism helped him to form his doctrine of the church as the union of the whole church with Christ rather than the personal character of select Christians. Augustine was a prolific author whose writings and teachings influenced the development of Christianity and Western intellectual thought and continue to be applicable today. Augustine died from an illness during the Vandal siege of Hippo.

Although the church in North Africa suffered periods of persecution and was weakened by internal division, historians suggest that Mediterranean Algeria was mostly Christian by the 5th century. Germanic Vandals invaded Africa from Spain in 429 and advanced westward with little resistance. The Vandals tried to convert African Christians to their Arian form of Christianity that had been deemed heretical by Rome. They ruled North Africa for nearly fifty years, weakening the region and the church.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for the believers in Algeria to stand firm in the Gospel.*

*Pray that pastors are equipped to share the Gospel boldly and to disciple other believers.*

*Pray for protection and provision for Christians in this region.*

# ALGERIA



# Week Two

*"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."  
– 1 John 4:11*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Muslim Arab invasion of North Africa began after the conquest of Egypt in 642. Muslim Arabs reached the Atlantic coast by 682, but were stalled and driven back by Berber and Byzantine forces in various locations. In 711, Muslim Arabs had finished their conquest of North Africa and begun the conquest of Spain.

As in other regions, Muslims collected the *jizya* tax from the non-Muslims they had conquered in return for protection and a degree of religious autonomy. Although many Berbers converted to Islam in the 8th century, they resisted the Arab conquest. The Berber priestess Kahina is heralded for her heroic resistance and leadership against the Arab Empire. Efforts were ultimately unsuccessful and the Berbers continued to be taxed, treated as second-class Muslims, or enslaved by the new rulers. Christians lived alongside Muslims, but Arabization, Islamization, and increasing social pressures eroded their numbers. Archaeological evidence from the city of Qal'a (central Algeria) suggests that Christian communities continued to exist into the early 12th century.

Christianity was practiced in Spanish held regions along the Algerian Coast, such as the port city of Oran. The Ottoman Empire gained control of Algiers in 1525 and used it as their base to attack European boats in the Mediterranean. Piracy helped fund the government and the primary targets were Catholic shipping vessels. Captured Christians would be sold into slavery. The Ottomans ruled the region known as Ottoman Algeria from 1525 until the French invasion of Algiers in 1830.

## RECENT HISTORY

France occupied Algeria in 1830 and their southward conquest of territory included many atrocities. The French declared northern Algeria part of France in 1848. A rapid period of colonization followed as hundreds of thousands of Europeans, mostly Christians, settled in Algeria by 1900. Churches were established in this time to serve the expatriate community and some sought to reach the people of Algeria with the good news of Christ.

Algerians, led by the National Liberation Front (FLN) revolted against French rule in 1954 and after a bloody war, won their independence in 1962. When Islamist parties defeated the FLN in the first multi-party elections in Algeria in 1990 and 1991, military intervention sparked the Algerian civil war. It lasted over ten years and an estimated 150,000 Algerians were killed. Algerians elected former Prime Minister Abdelmadjid Tebboune as president in December 2019.

Although the church in North Africa suffered periods of persecution and was weakened by internal division, historians suggest that Mediterranean Algeria was mostly Christian by the 5th century. Germanic Vandals invaded Africa from Spain in 429 and advanced westward with little resistance. The Vandals tried to convert African Christians to their Arian form of Christianity that had been deemed heretical by Rome. They ruled North Africa for nearly fifty years, weakening the region and the church.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for leaders that will support Christianity and the spread of the Gospel in this region.*

*Pray for unity among the Church and protection from division.*

*Pray for hearts to be open to the good news of Jesus.*

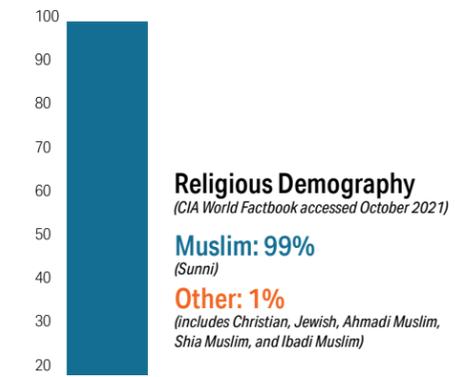
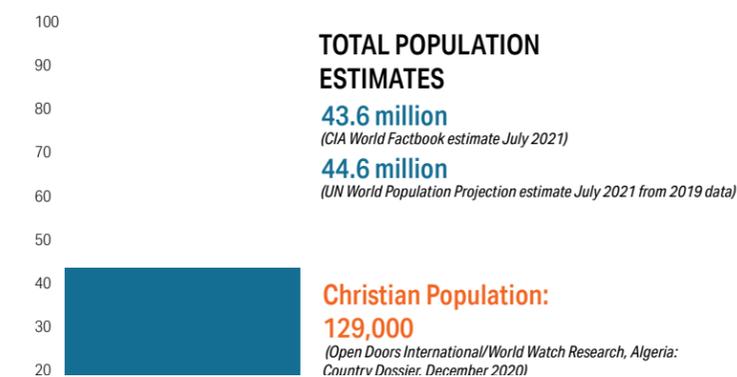
# ALGERIA



# Week Three

*“preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction.”*  
– 2 Timothy 4:2

## THE CHURCH TODAY



The constitution of Algeria declares Islam the religion of the state and the vast majority of Algerians are Sunni Muslim. The picture of Christianity in Algeria is less clear. Estimates of the number of Christians in Algeria vary widely from 20,000 to 600,000. Those who suggest larger numbers equate it to large foreign Christian populations. Those who report that there are fewer Christians suggest that MBBs constitute the majority. Christians are mainly found in Algiers and the province of Bejaia, Tizi Ouzou, Annaba, Ouargla, and Oran. The majority of Christians in Algeria belong to Protestant groups.

Although there are traditional churches and foreign Christians in the country, the indigenous church in Algeria is young. It is primarily first-generation believers who are navigating the joys and challenges of leadership, growth, and discipleship under scrutiny. In 2006 the Algerian government passed “Ordinance 06-03 to Regulate the Worship of non-Muslim Creeds” which has, in practice, severely challenged Christian communities. The ordinance stipulates that worship can only be conducted in buildings approved for that purpose by the National Commission for Non-Muslim Worship and makes it criminal to conduct activities that, “shake the faith or could shake the faith of a Muslim.” Numerous Christian leaders attest that despite applications being submitted, they have had no communication from the Commission and no approvals have been granted. At least 18 churches affiliated with the EPA have been closed by the government since 2017 (17 of them in 2019) for registration and permit violations. Because of these closures and the lack of approval for additional places of worship, many Christian citizens are forced to meet in unofficial house churches.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for the house churches, that they would be strengthened in the face of persecution and would remain steadfast.*

*Pray that pastors would have the perseverance to continue leading and discipling despite difficulties.*

*Pray for laws to change and doors to open so that more churches can be planted.*

# ALGERIA



# Week Four

*"For nothing will be impossible with God." – Luke 1:37*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Algerian law grants all individuals the right to practice their religion if they respect public order and regulations, but proselytizing to Muslims by non-Muslims is a crime. While the 2016 constitution provided for freedom of conscience and worship, "freedom of conscience" was removed during the constitutional referendum passed on November 1, 2020 and altered to read, "the freedom of opinion is inviolable. The freedom to exercise worship is guaranteed if it is exercised in accordance with the law." Some Christian leaders are concerned that this could allow for increased persecution of Christians and other religious minorities.

Christians are routinely monitored and Ordinance 06-03 is strictly enforced and many places of worship have been closed for permit and registration violations. Christians meeting in unofficial house churches are vulnerable to government intervention as the law states that the government may shut down any religious service taking place in private homes or in outdoor settings without official approval. Christian leaders are careful when communicating via telephone and email due to instances of monitoring and Christians have been arrested, jailed, and fined on charges of proselytizing non-Muslims.

MBBs in Algeria face substantial pressures from extended family and society in addition to legal discrimination in personal status issues. This can include exclusion from social interaction or inheritance, house arrest, violence, forced marriage to a Muslim for women, and job loss or discrimination in job promotions. Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslim men unless the man converts to Islam. Children born to a Muslim man are considered Muslim and in the event of divorce, a court determines matters of custody.

Christians and other religious minorities have experienced difficulties in importing religious materials for public use and obtaining visas and the majority of Christians prefer to utilize Bible and prayer applications on their cell phones rather than carry a Bible. There have been reports of Christians being refused aid from their community during the Covid-19 pandemic.

### *Join Us In* PRAISING GOD

- Praise God that he is drawing people to salvation in Christ, people are being disciplined, and the ministry is growing.
- Praise God for the new leaders and laborers being developed.
- Praise God that new leaders and laborers are going out to minister and that they are seeing growth.

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## PRAYERS

*Pray for an end to persecution and that believers will have the freedom to share the Gospel openly.*

*Pray for protection for those persecuted and that they would experience God in the midst with them.*

*Pray for the Church body to be unified and of one accord.*

*Pray that positive relationships between Christian leaders and Muslims would result in those Muslims converting and embracing the Gospel.*

# ALGERIA



# Week One

*"But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, And on His Law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither; And in whatever he does, he prospers." – Psalm 1:2-3*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The church of Morocco will be united, strongly rooted in the Word of God, active in discipleship and evangelism, growing in new areas across the country, fruitful, and free to worship publicly.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN MOROCCO

The history and influence of early Christianity in Morocco is less well documented than in other countries. Christianity spread into Northern Morocco by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century while it was the Roman province of Mauretania Tingitana with its capital at Tingis (Tangier). There were Christian communities within the major cities of the region, including Tangier, Rabat and Fez by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century with bishops in several cities.

Roman rule at the far western edge of the empire was remote and many soldiers were withdrawn due to internal conflict and skirmishes with the indigenous people. A Roman centurion named Marcellus was martyred in Tangier in 298 after refusing to renounce his faith in Christ. By the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity had spread into the interior of Morocco and even some Amazigh (Berber) tribes had completely converted.

Morocco was invaded by German Vandals via Spain in 429. They adhered to the Arian form of Christianity deemed heretical by Rome and Byzantium, but their influence was shallow and short lived. Berber tribes invaded Vandal territories and the Byzantines re-established rule in North Africa in 533. In the far west, Byzantine re-occupation was limited to Ceuta and Tangier, but their influence extended further.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for a strong foundation in the Word of God - access to, passion for, understanding of, and transformation by.*

*Pray for effective discipleship and growth amongst believers.*

*Pray that God raises up laborers and leaders of prayer.*

# MOROCCO



# Week Two

*"So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." – Ephesians 2:19-22*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

The Muslim Arab invasion of North Africa began in the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century and by 682 they had reached the Atlantic coast. Some Berber tribes continued to resist the Muslims, but others converted after the negotiations of their chiefs. Even some of those who had been nominally Christian were swayed.

Once again, Morocco was on the far edge of an empire. The Almoravids emerged amongst the Berbers in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century to rule over Morocco from Marrakech and much of Spain from Seville. Historians suggest the Almoravids held a belief that forced conversion of infidels was pleasing to God which made their treatment of non-Muslims more hostile than previous rulers. The Almohads succeeded them by 1140 with greater fervor for forced conversion. Their initial policy was to spare dhimmi who converted, but threaten those who did not with death. The number of Christians declined precipitously.

During the French occupation, many French and Spanish Christians lived in the country. Catholic and Protestant churches were established in all major Moroccan cities and they could worship freely. Missionary activity was abundant during the colonial period, as well. The Gospel Missionary Union (GMU) and the Emmanuel Mission Sahara arrived in 1894 and 1926. The Reformed Church of France formed the Evangelical Church of Morocco. Christian churches invested in Moroccan communities to care for abandoned children, provide education, and medical care. Christian radio was even being shared abroad from Tangier.

In the years following Morocco's independence, the government began to assert control over churches. Bells were removed from church buildings and in the late 1960s ministries were expelled from the country or closed. An indigenous Moroccan church began to emerge at this time. They met in house churches with missionaries and steadily increased in number until 1984 when King Hassan II suspected the Christians to be plotting a coup. He had them detained and interrogated, which resulted in some recanting their faith and an overall cooling of church growth. Hassan II died in 1999. House churches began to grow again in the first ten years of the reign of King Mohammed VI. Moroccans were leading church planting and training efforts and an estimated 4,000 Moroccan Christians were meeting weekly across the country.

## RECENT HISTORY

In 2010 the Moroccan government suddenly, strategically, and without proper due process arrested and deported approximately 150 foreign Christians. These people had been located in cities across Morocco and were representatives of nearly every Christian organization working in the country. Indigenous Moroccan Christians were detained and questioned, as well. It became clear that the government decided to take a hard stance against proselytism and that the police had informants within the house churches of Morocco. This bred mistrust and isolation amongst the indigenous Christians and their house churches.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for a strong foundation in the Word of God - access to, passion for, understanding of, and transformation by.*

*Pray for effective discipleship and growth amongst believers.*

*Pray that God raises up laborers and leaders of prayer.*

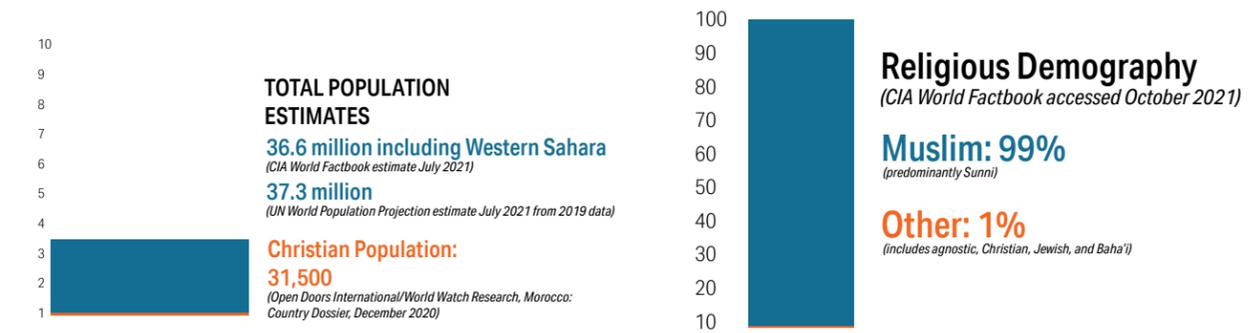
# MOROCCO



# Week Three

*"But rejoice, all who take refuge in You, Sing for joy forever! And may You shelter them, That those who love Your name may rejoice in You." – Psalm 5:11*

## THE CHURCH TODAY



Islam is the religion of Morocco, and the king holds the title of Commander of the Faithful, is the protector of Islam, and is the guarantor of freedom of worship in the country. While Morocco is comparatively religiously tolerant, proselytization with the intent to convert Muslims from Islam to another religion is considered illegal. Although open to much interpretation, it is a criminal offense to “shake the faith of a Muslim” which confines Christian outreach and expression. Conviction of proselytization results in 6 months to 3 years in prison. Except for those in the Jewish community, all those born in Morocco are declared Sunni Muslim.

Christian denominations recognized from before Moroccan independence include Roman Catholic, Coptic Orthodox, Anglican, and French Protestant. These are considered expatriate communities and have greatly decreased in size since independence. They are allowed to retain their church buildings as long as they are being regularly used for church services. This has been difficult given shrinking attendance numbers and the government can and has taken over buildings that have fallen into disuse.

Front line workers report that there are 80-100 house churches gathering across Morocco. The majority of Muslim background believers are from the younger generation and are concentrated in large cities like Casablanca, Marrakech, Agadir, and Tangier. House churches can be found in smaller cities, but it is more difficult for them. Many of the leaders and pastors of these house churches gather to support one another and pray. Western Sahara is a unique situation. It has a small number of believers with known Christian ministries serving in camps, but no known house churches. House churches are allowed to meet as long as they do not become public or draw too much attention to themselves. This is a challenging environment in which to minister and spread the hope of Christ. Sunday services are lengthy, but refreshing, and include preaching, worship, sharing of refreshments and fellowship.

Christian media has been a highly effective evangelism tool to Moroccans. Radio, television, and social media are all available and have strong content.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for connection and unity of vision, mission, and strategy between house churches and believers.*

*Pray for God to work through the government for the good of believers and the people of Morocco.*

*Pray for Moroccan Christians to be legally recognized and able to worship, evangelize, and disciple freely.*

*Pray that discrimination and social pressures against Moroccan Christians would end - that they would be protected.*

## MOROCCO



# Week Four

*“Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.” – Isaiah 41:10*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

Moroccan Christians from a Muslim background face the greatest amount of persecution, particularly from family and society. Conversion is considered shameful to the family and may prompt a range of responses. MBB's may be pressured to recant their faith, may be isolated from family or society, or may be forced to marry a Muslim. Those considered apostates can be referred to courts where they may be forcibly divorced, lose inheritance, or lose child custody. In extreme instances they may face violent retaliation from family members.

Moroccan Christians face discrimination in employment - either acquiring a job or maintaining one once their faith is known.

Expatriate community churches are monitored to be sure Moroccan nationals do not attend their services. This restricts fellowship amongst believers and unity within the Body of Christ.

Christians have historically been considered a threat to the king and his authority, so security services monitor Moroccan and expatriate Christian activities carefully. Occasionally Christians will be detained and questioned.

Perhaps the greatest persecution is the psychological impact of Christianity being considered foreign and Moroccan Christians having to remain almost invisible to society.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for connection and unity of vision, mission, and strategy between house churches and believers.*

*Pray for God to work through the government for the good of believers and the people of Morocco.*

*Pray for Moroccan Christians to be legally recognized and able to worship, evangelize, and disciple freely.*

*Pray that discrimination and social pressures against Moroccan Christians would end - that they would be protected.*

## Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God that he is drawing people to salvation in Christ, people are being disciplined, and the ministry is growing.
- Praise God for the new leaders and laborers being developed.
- Praise God that new leaders and laborers are going out to minister and seeing growth.



# Week One

*"Be strong and let your heart take courage, All you who wait for the Lord." – Psalm 31:24*

## VISION FROM THE FRONTLINES

The Word of God will expand and spread throughout all of Sudan and South Sudan prompting the establishment of healthy churches amongst every tribe and community.

## THE GOSPEL LANDS IN SUDAN

The New Testament describes how an angel of the Lord and the promptings of the Holy Spirit led Philip to share the gospel with a court official of Candace who had journeyed to Jerusalem to worship and was seeking to understand the words of the prophet Isaiah. Many Bible translations refer to this official as an "Ethiopian eunuch," but scholars believe this individual was from the northern region of modern Sudan then known as the Kingdom of Meroe (Acts 8:26-40). This kingdom developed from the kingdom of Kush, which was often referenced in the Old Testament as the land immediately south of Egypt. It was part of the larger region known as Nubia along the Nile River. The encounter between Philip and the Meroitic court official would have happened by 40 AD and paints a beautiful picture of the inclusivity and restorative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although he likely brought the message of the gospel to Sudanese soil, there isn't evidence of a Christian community growing in response.

Egyptian Christians spread their faith into Nubia. The Meroitic kingdom collapsed around 300 AD and three Nubian states arose along the Nile - Nobatia was the northernmost, Makuria in the center, and Alodia (Alwa in Arabic) in the south. It is likely that there was an observable Christian presence in Nubia in the 5th century. Archeological evidence suggests a church had been built in Faras, the capital of Nobatia, by the middle of the 5th century and that Christians from Aksum (Ethiopia) had influenced Soba, the capital of Alodia.

According to the writings of John of Ephesus (506-586), the kingdoms of Nubia became Christian by the end of the 6th century. The process was motivated and complicated by conflict arising from the church schism at Chalcedon (451). An ecclesial structure was developed, many Nubians were ordained as priests, cathedrals were constructed, and monasteries were established. Ornate murals decorated the churches and depicted both dark skinned Nubians and fairer skinned individuals. Archeological evidence indicates a pattern of turning pagan temples into churches across the region. Church liturgy was in Greek and the conversion of the region was rapid given the lack of a Nubian translation of the Bible until the 8th or 9th century. Christianity flourished and grew in all three kingdoms.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that the leaders & tribal leaders of Sudan will come to belief in Christ and fall under God's plan and will.*

*Pray for unity amongst the Church in Sudan - may they be a witness to a watching world.*

*Pray for healthy ways to manage conflict - may leaders find common ground for the glory of God and the good of the people as they govern.*

*Pray for encouragement over pastors and leaders - may they be renewed and refreshed even while they help to meet spiritual and physical needs.*

# SUDAN



# Week Two

*"God is our refuge and strength, A very ready help in trouble."*

*– Psalm 46:1*

## ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY

After their conquest of Egypt, Muslim Arabs launched an attack into Nubia from Aswan. They advanced into the territory, were pushed back in 642 and again in 652, when they could not conquer Dongola due to its heavy fortification and the fierce resistance of the Nubian people. The Muslim Arabs and Nubians entered into a cease fire, followed by a unique agreement called the Baqt. The specifics outlined within it are uncertain, but it is clear that it included a mutually beneficial exchange of goods at regular intervals. Nubians would provide slaves and African commodities, while Muslims would provide Egyptian goods. The northernmost Nubian kingdoms united in the 7th century and Nubia continued to flourish as a Christian region. Under the Baqt agreement the Nubian church was able to continue to grow and remain connected to the church in Egypt.

Toward the end of their rule in the mid 8th century, Umayyad officials imprisoned the Coptic Patriarch Michael I and his secretary John the Deacon. The Nubian king Kyriakos demanded his release and ultimately invaded Egypt to pressure the governor. The Patriarch and his secretary were both released with a plea that the Nubian army withdraw. This exchange increased the perceptions that a powerful African Christian nation could resist and defend against Islamic conquest and oppression.

Towards the end of the 13th century political unrest gave the Muslim Egyptian Sultan Baybars and his Mamluk army a foothold in Nubia. As a result, the people were given the choice to convert to Islam, die by the sword, or pay the jizya (tax) for protection. The early spread of Christianity into what is now South Sudan is less well documented, but Catholic missionary efforts began from Khartoum in the mid-19th century in response to the horrors of the slave trade in central and south Sudan. The Islamic nationalist Mahdist movement of 1885-1899 greatly reduced the number of Christians in the region.

## RECENT HISTORY

Most of South Sudan was included in the British colony of Equatoria established in 1870. Six months before Sudan gained its independence in 1956 the country was already involved in a civil war that would last for 12 years and claim an estimated 500,000 lives. In March of 1972 the Addis Ababa Agreement ended the war, but peace was tense and short lived. A second civil war began in 1983 and lasted 22 years with roughly two million killed from violence, famine, and disease and another 4 million displaced. President Omar al-Bashir came to power through a 1989 coup, Islamization increased substantially under his regime, and Sudan became known for funding radical Islamic groups and compromising freedom of religion. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the war in January 2005 required that after a six-year period, a referendum on independence would be held for the people of South Sudan. Over 99% of those polled voted for independence and South Sudan became independent in July 2011. Many Christians emigrated southward from Khartoum and elsewhere in response.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for continued establishment of new churches and that the church planting movement in South Sudan would successfully spread into Sudan.*

*Pray for protection over newly established churches and unregistered churches.*

*Pray for pastors and leaders to be raised up from within Sudan.*

*Pray for deep, biblical and practical training for pastors and leaders to equip them with a solid foundation in the Word of God so that they can guide the people of Sudan into a deep, transformative understanding of the gospel and the Bible.*

## SUDAN

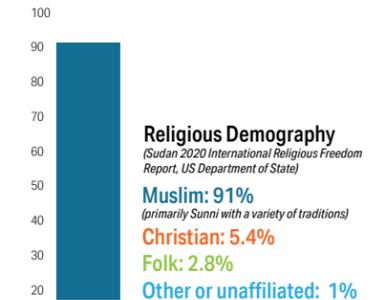


# Week Three

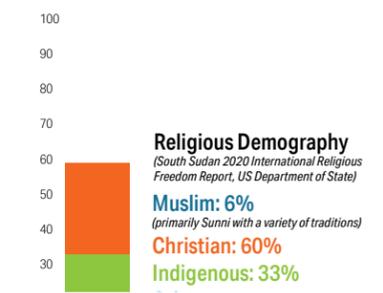
*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; All those who follow His commandments have a good understanding; His praise endures forever." – Psalm 111:10*

## THE CHURCH TODAY

### Sudan



### South Sudan



Both Sudan and South Sudan continue to struggle with instability and ongoing conflict. South Sudan experienced civil war from 2013 to 2018. Unprecedented flooding in the past three years, ongoing violence, the Covid-19 pandemic, and a struggling economy have caused great hardship. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2021, more than two-thirds of the population needed some form of humanitarian assistance and 1.7 million people remained internally displaced with over 2 million refugees having fled. Many schools have been closed or severely damaged and numerous teachers have fled. UNICEF reported that more than 2.8 million children were out of school in 2021. Infrastructure is inconsistent across the country. Travel is difficult, and medical facilities are limited.

Despite these hardships, the Church in South Sudan and its witness is growing. Many consider it a stabilizing influence in the country. According to their website the South Sudan Council of Churches “provides a platform to enhance the spirit of Ecumenical cooperation towards collective action for peace; by its very nature, the Church is a Peacemaker.” The South Sudanese Church has been a key component in providing humanitarian aid, education, and hope to the people. People are hungry to hear the Gospel, but travel between locations and access to resources has been challenging.

Christians reside throughout the country, but are primarily found in major cities like Khartoum, Port Sudan, Kassala, Gedaref, El Obeid, and El Fasher and in parts the Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile State. There are 36 Christian denominations of which 24 are registered. Because the government banned evangelism among the Muslim majority, but allowed charitable work, Christians established a network of schools, hospitals, and clinics across Sudan.

## PRAYERS

*Pray that the gospel will penetrate the hearts and minds of the Sudanese people - may they understand the Word of God.*

*Pray that the Word of God would expand and spread throughout Sudan and that churches would arise across both countries and amidst every tribe.*

*Pray for wisdom and discernment over church leaders as they advocate for policies and infrastructure that will benefit the people.*

*Pray for the development of physical infrastructure within South Sudan.*

# SUDAN



# Week Four

*"Beloved, let's love one another; for love is from God, and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God." – 1 John 4:7*

## PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIAN

While Christianity is not the minority religion in South Sudan, churches are still targeted for violence and extortion. At times members of tribes or local militias will damage or try to forcibly seize church property. There have also been instances of violence against church compounds and their inhabitants. People have been harassed and even killed. Poverty and extreme need make people vulnerable to manipulation and human trafficking. MBBs and Christians from other tribal backgrounds face substantial family and societal pressure upon conversion.

Outside of the capital, threats have been issued to Christians and Christians from Muslim extremists and churches have been burned or otherwise destroyed in rural areas. There is a history of government sanctioned attacks on rebels in the Nuba mountains and Blue Nile regions - both of these regions hold clusters of predominantly Christian communities who felt targeted. Many have been killed and many have fled.

Ethnic African Christians and MBBs face the greatest degree of pressure and violence. MBBs may be monitored by religious leaders or government officials. Family and neighbors are likely to pressure them to renounce their conversion by a variety of means. MBBs are vulnerable to job loss and discrimination that has been intensified by economic stagnation and the Covid-19 pandemic. Christian women and girls, particularly MBBs, are vulnerable to sexual violence, forced marriage, and kidnapping for sex-slavery.

### *Join Us In* PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for new churches being planted, new believers coming to faith in Christ.
- Praise God for the faithfulness of pastors and leaders who remain in Sudan despite the many challenges they face.
- Praise God for the healing of pastors who have battled diseases like malaria.
- Praise God for the work and leadership of the South Sudan Council of Churches, and for leaders being discipled and trained.
- Praise God for the ability to witness the love of God to the people of Sudan in simple, tangible ways.
- Praise God for His provision of land and finances and for the establishment of schools for the children of S. Sudan.

## PRAYERS

*Pray for biblically sound, faithful, and godly teachers to commit to investing in children through the schools.*

*Pray for reliable transportation to bring children to and from school.*

*Pray that God will provide finances and equipment like water wells and all-terrain vehicles to help sustain and advance His ministry.*

*Pray that the Lord will provide for the humanitarian needs of the people - may clinics be established and the love of God be on display through their care.*

# SUDAN



# Week One

*“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – Matthew 28:19-20*

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TRAINING

### VISION

Equip selected Middle Eastern and North African women to be godly, competent, and confident leaders in their churches who will replicate the leadership training in their respective countries to equip additional women.

### ORIGIN

The seed for the Women's Leadership Training was planted in Ananias House after observing the multitude of women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region coming to faith in Christ in the midst of continued conflict and instability in the region. There was a need for strategic equipping to help women grow in understanding of God and his Word, be a witness for God before a broken and hurting world, confidently walk as new creations in Christ, and skillfully lead others on their Christian faith journey.

In 2018, Pastors from the Ananias House network nominated potential leaders in their faith communities for the project and after a successful pilot, the Women's Leadership Training program developed a five-year plan of training the MENA women. The training was built, upon four key areas: Trauma Healing and Encouragement, Discipleship, Leadership Skills and Economic Development.

### CURRENT SITUATION

The program currently trains 38 women from four countries with the help of 3 field workers and a team of nearly 30 American women volunteers. Training materials are developed by the American team in close communication with advisors who have a strong cultural understanding of the MENA region. This allows the training team to create culturally relevant material. Teaching is delivered in English and translated into Arabic & Turkish and written materials in Arabic & Turkish are provided for participants to use for training in their local churches.

Women's Leadership Training aims to grow women leaders who disciple other women and equip more leaders. To that end, MENA participants are required to:

- Complete assignments both prior to and after attending the trainings
- Discuss what they learned with their pastor and mentor
- Impart what they learned to women in their church
- Work under the supervision of and report to a field coordinator in their country

## PRAYERS FOR THE MENA WOMEN

*Pray for strength for the women to stand firm and endure the difficulty they face with hope.*

*Pray for supernatural joy in the midst of great challenges.*

*Pray for creative thinking to solve problems.*

*Pray for protection from the enemy.*

*Pray for endurance and commitment to reduce conflict and move toward reconciliation.*

*Pray for life-giving community amongst the participants – may they support, encourage, and counsel one another.*

*Pray for courage to move counter culturally when necessary.*

*Pray for healing from trauma.*

*Pray for relief and refreshing.*

*Pray for application of the things learned during training.*

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING



# Week Two

*"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" – 1 Peter 2:9*

## WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TRAINING

### CHALLENGES

The women participating in the leadership training and those to whom they minister face an array of challenges. Ongoing conflict in the region has led to infrastructure collapse and economic crisis in two of the four countries. At this time, obtaining basic necessities is difficult as there are shortages of food, medication, quality medical care, and even extreme rationing of electricity. Employment opportunities are scarce for women and increasingly so for men. The influx of refugees coupled with strained resources exacerbates wariness, mistrust, prejudice, and even hostility between citizens of the countries the women represent.

The honor-shame culture endemic to the MENA region poses a challenge to communication and application of Biblical ideas such as sin, grace, and forgiveness. When Muslim women convert to Christianity, it is viewed as shameful by their Muslim family members and community. In an effort to restore family honor, rejection and retaliation can be severe. Lives that were once entwined within the community may be completely lost upon conversion. This is isolating and lonely.

Underneath all of these challenges lies trauma produced by a society marked by violence, conflict, and sexual abuse. Healing from trauma is one of the most pressing needs of those being trained and those to whom they minister.

### Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for the work he is doing in the women being trained - the growth in them between year one and three is astounding.
- Praise God for covering each of the women and revealing a greater understanding of their value to Him and to the Kingdom of God
- Praise God for the influence of the MENA sisters on the hearts of the American team and the greater unity of the global church.
- Praise God for opening doors for travel to get everyone into one country together for training.
- Praise God for faithful prayer partners and donors who support this work.

### PRAYERS FOR THE ANANIAS HOUSE TEAM

*Pray for understanding of MENA culture to infuse training materials and teaching environments.*

*Pray for wisdom in the development of training content.*

*Pray for healthy community amongst the Ananias House team that can serve as a model for sisters in the MENA region.*

*Pray for strength, endurance, and protection.*

*Pray for clear communication between the Ananias House team leaders and translators in the field.*

*Pray for funds and ability to travel to the field for in-person training, and for her family's support to travel.*

*Pray for a reliable training location that accepts citizens from all of the countries represented.*

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING



# Week Three

*"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others." – 2 Timothy 2:2*

## PASTOR/LEADER TRAINING

### VISION

Equip pastors and leaders in the Middle East and North Africa with theological training and leadership skills to strengthen the local church.

### ORIGIN

The power of the Holy Spirit is drawing thousands to faith in Christ across the MENA region. Most of these new believers are from a Muslim background (MBBs). Many have limited knowledge of the Bible upon their conversion and begin a fundamental worldview shift under intense pressure from family and society. Syncretism and false teachings are a threat to believers who have not been firmly rooted in the Word of God. These new believers need community and support. The Pastor/Leader Training program was developed after observing this need and the difficulty of training and retaining local leaders to strengthen the church. Most churches do not have the resources to train their leaders in seminaries. Because of the hardships in the MENA region, local church leaders who do seek a seminary education abroad often do not return. This is discouraging and not sustainable. Ananias House sought to bring quality Christian education to local pastors and leaders that would serve them in their context, root them in scripture, and empower them with theological training, leadership development, and strategic support. As these first-generation leaders and their ministries grew, they would then train their own leadership as a second generation through whom a third generation could grow, and so on, thereby sustainably strengthening the local church to proclaim the name of Jesus. In 2009 nearly 30 men and women came together in Damascus as the first Ananias House Strategic Leadership training class. The ministry has multiplied and produced much fruit since that time.

### CURRENT SITUATION

Ananias House now has strategic leadership training classes of multiple generations across ten countries in the MENA region and had expanded into Europe before the Covid-19 pandemic severely restricted travel. Over 600 leaders have been trained and these leaders have planted dozens of churches.

Participants in the Leadership Training program are identified by local pastors and leaders. The program offers courses on theology and practical ministry with the Bible as the foundation. Each course requires 40-50 hour's worth of homework, followed by facilitated intensive small group discussion and approximately 40 hours of classroom interaction that ideally takes place in person over a single week. The program requires 3-5 years to finish depending upon the number of courses completed each year. Participants are supported virtually between face to face gatherings. Throughout the program, leaders are equipped with the knowledge, experience, and resources to build a systematic discipleship and evangelism program suited to the target groups in their region. They take the resources and training they have received and begin to invest it into the next generation of leaders as they themselves continue to grow.

## PRAYERS FOR THE LEADERSHIP TRAINING

*Pray that those in training would grow in depth of knowledge and understanding of scripture, and would apply what they are learning. (Colossians 3:16)*

*Pray for discernment of the Word of God. May pastors and leaders be so deeply rooted in scripture that they can identify false teaching and protect the church from its influence and from syncretism. (Ephesians 5:6-10)*

*Pray for safety over pastors, leaders, and the growing church.*

*Pray for encouragement, support, wisdom, and rest for pastors and leaders so that they remain steadfast and engaged when it seems easier to leave or give up.*

*Pray for healthy relationships and community to be developed amongst participants.*

*Pray for sustained and multiplied leadership training. May the church in the MENA region successfully equip ongoing generations of pastors and leaders. (Hebrews 13:7)*

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING



# Week Four

*"But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."*

– James 1:5

## PASTOR/LEADER TRAINING

### CHALLENGES

The countries in which Ananias House serves face varying degrees of challenges, but hostility toward Christians and particularly MBBs is a common factor. War, persecution, instability, monitoring, and life-threatening circumstances make it difficult for many Christian and MBB leaders to gather for the ongoing Christian education, intensive Bible study, and leadership training that equips them for ministry. Many place their lives on the line to attend training. Although gathering in the country in which pastors and leaders minister is preferable, travel outside of certain countries is sometimes required.

The pastors and leaders that Ananias House invests in are pulled in many directions because the needs are so great. They lead existing churches, plant new churches, disciple their flock, study the Bible and their coursework, apply the lessons they're learning, help mediate disputes, engage with other leaders and pastors, and more. Time is a precious gift and a constraint that they must manage wisely. The dynamic situation in the MENA region means that many people are in transition between one place and another. Pastors identify and invest in leaders who move. While their efforts are not wasted, it can feel as though they are not making progress when they have to start afresh. There are substantial numbers of refugees and internally displaced people in many of these countries. In some, proselytism and evangelism are banned. Gathering to learn and applying what they are learning are both fraught with risk.

Strategically investing in leaders of the MENA region requires an extensive array of resources and coordination across the borders of nations and cultures. Each leadership class needs mature believers with experience as pastors and leaders to commit to journeying with them for the duration of their 3-5 year program. Finding suitable training locations for in person gatherings is crucial for fostering relationships between participants, but this has been more difficult because of travel restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing conflict. Financial resources are necessary for procuring materials and covering training costs for the participants so that the program is accessible. Wisdom from God and discernment are needed to steward these resources well and to the glory of God.

### Join Us In PRAISING GOD

- Praise God for the multiplication of pastors, leaders, and churches in the MENA region.
- Praise God for the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail over the church. (Matthew 16:18)

### PRAYERS FOR THE ANANIAS HOUSE TEAM

*Pray that the Lord would raise up experienced pastors and leaders who share the vision and heart of the ministry and are committed to consistently investing in current and future pastors and leaders in the MENA region.*

*Pray for wisdom and discernment in ministry strategy - may God guide the direction and priorities of the ministry. (James 1:5; Romans 12:2)*

*Pray for provision of finances to sustain and grow the ministry. (Philippians 4:19)*

*Pray for good stewardship of time and resources.*

*Pray for favorable conditions and locations in which to gather in person for training.*

*Pray for healthy community and communication for the Ananias House team as they plan, strategize, prepare, and deliver training.*

## STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING

## PRAYERS

*Pray that God would continue to raise up faithful leaders in the MENA region willing to disciple and lead the hungry and hurting who are coming to faith.*

*Pray that God would sustain these leaders and provide for their immediate needs so they can focus on the ministries that God has called them to.*

*Pray for protection and safety for these pastors and their families.*

*Pray for others to come alongside Ananias House in support of these faithful pastors.*

## FRONTLINE WORKERS

### VISION

To empower and equip Frontline Workers (FLWs) - which includes mature Christians, new believers from Muslim background (MBBs) and 'next generation' leaders - with biblical knowledge, leadership skills, and financial support, so they, in turn, can invest in others. These skills and tools will enable the pastor and his team to evangelize, disciple and lead other believers to create and build strong, vibrant, self-sustaining Christian communities.

### ORIGIN

While the last decade of conflict and instability in the Middle East has resulted in large numbers of people converting to Christianity, the region's churches have been gripped with significant challenges. Many church leaders have fled the country for security and safety reasons, some perished in the conflict and some sought employment in neighboring countries. This exodus created a spiritual leadership vacuum in the region. As faithful believers began to step forward and lead, they faced an array of challenges, from both inside and outside of the church.

Often the Frontline Workers experience the pressures of persecution and hardship, working full time to provide for their family, as well as serving as a church leader. Pastors are being pushed beyond the limits of their strength as they face demands from the needs of their church body and the needs of their families. Ananias House comes alongside to help care for the physical needs of the leader's family, freeing them to focus more on the spiritual life and discipleship of the church body. As Paul commended the Philippian church, so we want to be faithful to provide for our brothers in need so they can focus on the work of the Kingdom. (Philippians 4).

# Week One

*"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." - Philippians 4:19*

HOLY BIBLE  
ILLUSTRATED

## CHILDREN/EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

### VISION

To open and maintain schools in specific areas in the MENA region where there is a high concentration of refugees. These schools will provide spiritual, educational, and psychosocial needs for children living in extreme conditions in the hopes that, as they are taught and disciplined, they will change the course of their lives and their country's history.

### ORIGIN

The Syrian refugee crisis remains the world's largest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Some areas within the Middle East have close to 1.8 million refugees, with little access to schools and resources. Children are in the most danger in these situations as they face the hardship of having their most immediate needs met as well as the danger of becoming targets for radicalization.

As these children live under the desperate need for basic provision, we have witnessed two very extreme and disturbing challenges. One is child labor issues as hunger and poverty amplify this problem since children can provide income that is vital for the family's survival. Another challenge is the hopelessness these children experience. This was tragically demonstrated when one child caught in the midst of his family's struggle attempted to commit suicide, believing that killing himself would help his family since they would have one less mouth to feed.

These children also face the danger of becoming targets for Islamists and IS for radicalization, and without intervention can serve to strengthen and grow the very forces that attacked and victimized them in the first place. By opening schools and ensuring these children an access to an education, they have a chance of a different future and the opportunity to learn, be disciplined, find purpose and hope, and encounter the eternal truth of the Gospel. This shift in trajectory for them will make the difference in their life, their family's life, and it will make a difference in their country's story as well. These children are the next generation and the hope of their nations.

# Week Two

*"You shall also teach them to your sons, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up." - Deuteronomy 11:19*

## PRAYERS

*Pray for each child as they grow and mature in their faith that God's Truth would heal and restore their lives from the hardship of trauma they have experienced.*

*Pray for strength and perseverance for the teachers and staff who fully invest in these students while they are dealing with their own hardships and struggles.*

*Pray for the students and staff that they will be a voice for the Gospel to their friends and families and that God will use their lives to offer hope to the community.*

*Pray for opportunities to open more schools in areas where they are most needed, and to be able to equip these schools with capable and gifted teachers.*

## GOSPEL CENTERED RESOURCING

## PRAYERS

*Pray for the 100,000 people who will hear the message of hope that only Christ can offer as well as for those who choose to continue in their discipleship journey.*

*Pray for Bible printing in the necessary languages, and for these Bibles to be placed in the hands of those who need them.*

*Pray for these discipleship relationships to grow and be fruitful.*

*Pray the local churches will reflect the hope and peace of Christ as they minister to the community.*

## 10/10 INITIATIVE

### VISION

To provide outreach and discipleship opportunities to churches in the MENA region as they minister to their communities. This is done by challenging the local churches in the 10 countries where we serve to unite in their commitment to each sharing the Gospel message with 10,000 people.

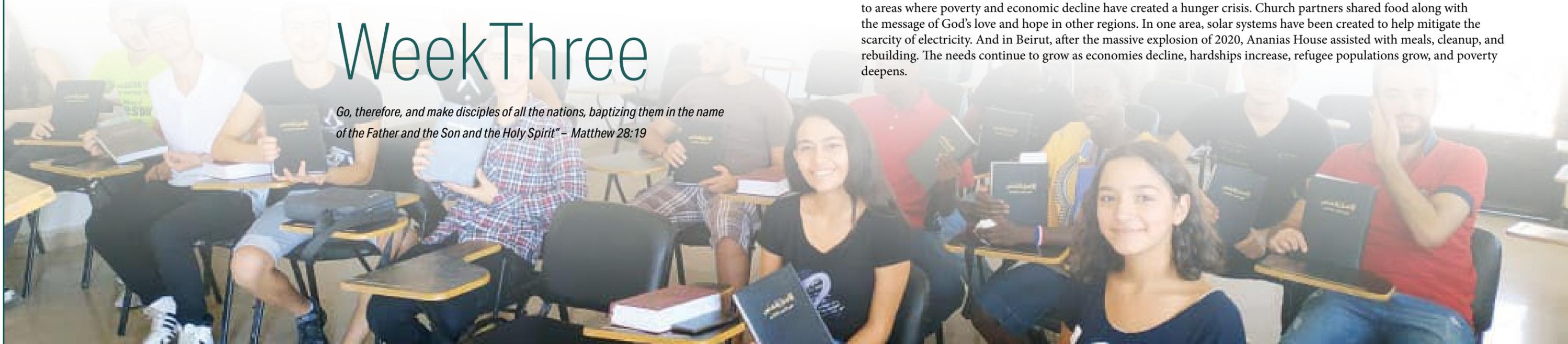
### PROCESS

This method of the 10/10 Initiative is twofold – evangelism and discipleship.

**Evangelism** - The church network in each country receives 10,000 copies of the Gospel of John (or the New Testament) to share with those in their communities who do not yet know Jesus. Similar to the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25), we recognize each country has different opportunities and resources. The churches are reaching out to as many individuals as they can - some will reach 50 people, some 100, and others 1000, etc.

Through uniting with other churches in the area, these believing communities will share the Gospel message with 100,000 people, offering hope to the brokenhearted and peace to those seeking. The churches are responsible for the evangelism & discipleship tools they are entrusted with as they spread God’s Good News.

**Discipleship** - As people come to faith, Ananias House will support the churches as they disciple the new believers. Our goal is to supply the resources (physical & spiritual) they need to encourage new believers in their spiritual journeys. For some it may be meeting over a meal to discuss Biblical principles, to others it might be access to training resources, etc. Our goal is to help create a sustainable disciple making culture within the churches.



## Week Three

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” – Matthew 28:19*

## Week Four

*“Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”  
– Galatians 6:2*

## RELIEF EFFORTS

### VISION

Ananias House seeks to equip communities of believers in the MENA region who are facing hardship and persecution. By providing support and resources to help meet physical needs, the local church is strengthened to live out the Gospel message and fulfill the Great Commission.

### ORIGIN

Thousands of people in the MENA region have been displaced by war and seek refuge in their neighboring countries. These communities add additional strain to the existing residents who are facing a scarcity of resources as they strive to meet their families’ needs. The region’s economic collapse, the corruption in government, the effects of the pandemic, all contribute to a devastating reality for many families. The local church is taking on the immense responsibility to reach out to as many people, from all faiths and backgrounds, to provide food, aid, practical care, and the Gospel message.

Relief efforts have taken various forms throughout the region, depending on the needs. Food packets have been delivered to areas where poverty and economic decline have created a hunger crisis. Church partners shared food along with the message of God’s love and hope in other regions. In one area, solar systems have been created to help mitigate the scarcity of electricity. And in Beirut, after the massive explosion of 2020, Ananias House assisted with meals, cleanup, and rebuilding. The needs continue to grow as economies decline, hardships increase, refugee populations grow, and poverty deepens.

## PRAYERS

*Pray the local churches will reflect the hope and peace of Christ as they minister to the community.*

*Pray for these families as they continue to seek ways to provide the basic necessities for their families.*

*Pray for healing and restoration from the trauma caused by the financial and emotional strain of day-to-day living.*

*Pray that in the midst of the hardships, each family would experience the comfort of Jesus and would come to a saving relationship with our Savior.*

## GOSPEL CENTERED RESOURCING

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