

significant news for christians

Some news that's encouraging—some disturbing—some with discernment. Watch and pray.

THE Church Around the WORLD

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Country in Focus: The Commonwealth of the Bahamas (1)

The Bahamas are an archipelago of 700 coral islands between Florida and Cuba. Forty of the islands are inhabited. The country is heavily dependent on tourism, with more than 80 percent of visitors coming from the US. The

Bahamas are an important banking center and also function as a tax haven for many. There is a strong Christian legacy in the Bahamas, and many political leaders have publicly expressed their faith. The Bahamas Christian Council has provided a unifying force and represents the majority of the churches in the islands.

Prayer concerns:

- Materialism, stimulated by tourism, deeply affects all levels of society. Lowering standards of morality have resulted in a rise in births out of wedlock, drug use, and violent crime;
- Christian commitment is low and nominalism is widespread, despite nearly all Bahamians claiming to be Christian;
- Many churches are without adequate pastoral care;
- The younger generation is increasingly out of touch with and alienated from a traditional church culture. Specific programs to reach the youth are needed.

Study: Good Works by Churches Often Go Unnoticed (2)

At least half of Americans realize that churches feed and clothe the poor, but far fewer are aware of other social services congregations provide, a new study shows. LifeWay Research found that 60 percent of Americans know of churches that have fed the hungry in the last six months. Half knew

of instances in which they provided clothing to the poor.

But scant percentages of the 1,000 Americans surveyed knew that church members teach job skills or help immigrants learn English (13 percent), volunteer to provide foster care (12 percent), or offer tax preparation assistance (8 percent).

“Unless you’ve received help from a church—or been involved in serving others—these kinds of programs may fly under the

Continued on page 2

radar,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of the Nashville-based evangelical research firm.

About a third of Americans knew of churches’ work to help disaster victims (39 percent) and shelter the homeless (33 percent). But only a quarter were aware of church members visiting prisoners (25 percent) or offering after-school programs (24 percent).



Christians in Philippines Face Torture ⁽³⁾

The Christian Post reports that Christians and other civilians in Mawari City, on the Philippine island of Mindanao, are trapped while the conflict between terrorists and the government goes on. Reports have emerged that Christians are especially being targeted by the terrorists and are being used as sex slaves and human shields. Although the Maute jihadists do not control much ground, they are reportedly holding about 100 Christians hostage. Some hostages have been able to escape and have reported on the situation. Authorities report that at least 44 civilians have been killed in the conflict, in addition to 71 security forces and 299 jihadists. Another 246,000 people have been displaced. One hostage, Roman Catholic priest Teresito Soganub, appeared in a recent video begging the president to



This month you can... Help Provide Clothing to the Needy

For many Americans, winter gear is an added expense that they simply can’t afford for themselves or their kids. While on his route recently, John Lunceford, a school bus driver from Kennewick, Washington, picked up a crying child who was standing in the freezing Northwest temperatures without a hat or scarf. Looking at the child’s red face, ears, and hands, John removed his own gloves and placed them on the young boy, telling the child, “It’ll be OK, it’ll be OK,” according to a post on the Kennewick School

District Facebook page.

Lunceford, a US Army veteran, went to the dollar store after dropping off his students to purchase 10 stocking hats and pairs of gloves, then returned to the school. Lunceford, who has been driving for the Kennewick School District for three years, headed straight to the administrative office so they could help him find the young boy from earlier that morning.

After finding the child in the library and giving him gloves and a hat, he also told all the kids in the library who were

on his route that if they needed winter gear, he would get it for them. “I’m a grandfather, you know,” Lunceford said. “No one wants a kid to suffer like that.”

After the school’s administrators posted the touching story on Facebook, it quickly went viral, prompting them to set up a donation page where others can lend a helping hand to the kids in their district.

Want to help a child near you this winter? Donate winter clothes to a local shelter or Salvation Army.



intervene. Soganub has not been heard from since the video, and his fate, along with that of the other hostages, remains uncertain.

Missionary Recounts Imprisonment in Sudan (4)

A Czech national who was captured and imprisoned alongside brutal ISIS militants recently shared the story of his harrowing ordeal and how God gave him strength and renewed his purpose. Petr Jasek grew up in Czechoslovakia under Communist rule. As a child, his parents were persecuted for their faith. As an adult, Jasek followed God’s call to serve with The Voice of the Martyrs in Sudan. While there, he was arrested and charged with being a spy. He was given a 20-year prison sentence and imprisoned alongside ISIS extremists.

During his time in prison, Jasek began to realize that God still had a plan and was bringing good out of his horrific situation. He ended up leading some fellow prisoners to Christ. “And I suddenly started to realize that there is a purpose, the Lord has a purpose for me to be in prison to share the gospel with those people,” Jasek explained.

After 14 months, Jasek was released. He credits the Czech government for negotiating his release and also expressed gratitude to the many believers who prayed for him. “When you come through this situation you realize that everything you have is the grace

of God and it is on his strength . . . not your own strength that you can survive,” Jasek said.

Christians in Coastal Kenya Fearful after Attacks (5)

A recent attack by al Shabaab militia resulted in the killing of 13 non-Muslims, mostly Christians, in coastal Kenya. Village Muslims helped Islamic extremists from the Somalia-based al Shabaab identify locations where the Christians resided, a survivor said. Several of the victims were beheaded. “The Christians were asked to recite the Islamic dogmas, which they could not, hence they were killed,” a source said. “We urged the government to investigate and bring to book these local Muslims who are harboring these al Shabaab terrorists, because the Christians who were decapitated were farmers.” Many area people are still missing or unaccounted for, and there are fears the casualty toll may increase.

Kenya ranked 18th on Christian support organization Open Doors’ 2017 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

China Seeks to Eradicate Sunday Schools (6)

As China clamps down on the freedoms of its state-run churches, officials in the country’s eastern Zhejiang province have

issued orders aimed at closing Sunday schools and keeping children from Christian events over the summer months. “For a long time, teenagers and students have not been allowed to participate in religious activities,” a local Christian said, referencing a Chinese law that seeks to control religion among children by forbidding them from attending religious events. This crackdown comes in the wake of an order from the Henan Provincial Three-Self Patriotic



Committee and the Henan Provincial China Christian Council that forbade churches from organizing summer camps for minors and students, citing high temperatures as a possible health risk.

In order to further their control, the Nanyang Municipal Religious Affairs Bureau, located in Henan, ordered all 20,000 registered house-church members in the province to join the Three-Self Church. Many Chinese Christians disagree with the Three-Self Church based on theological discrepancies and rampant government censorship, making the forced merging of these two branches a violation of religious freedom.

Police in India Arrest Six Christians (7)

After berating and slapping a pastor for reading the Bible instead of Hindu texts, police in India’s Uttar Pradesh state detained six Christians under “unlawful assembly” laws for worshipping together, sources said.

Police arrived at the worship service in the village and confiscated Bibles, hymnbooks, and devotionals. The police demanded that Pastor Asha Ram Sahni hand over any literature used to convert people, the church leader said.

When Pastor Sahni produced copies of the New Testament and gospel tracts, one of the officers said, “Not this ‘thing,’ give us the material with which you do conversions.”

“I told the officer, ‘I follow Jesus Christ with all my heart, I serve Christ, I share the gospel, but I never forcefully converted anyone. I don’t have any other books,’” Sahni said.

Police charged the six Christians with knowingly joining or continuing in any assembly of five or more persons after being commanded to disperse.

To check out books and other church resources, please visit www.TyndaleDirect.com.

And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

EPHESIANS 3:18