

Pray for the Persecuted

“You will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death” (Matthew 24:9).

“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

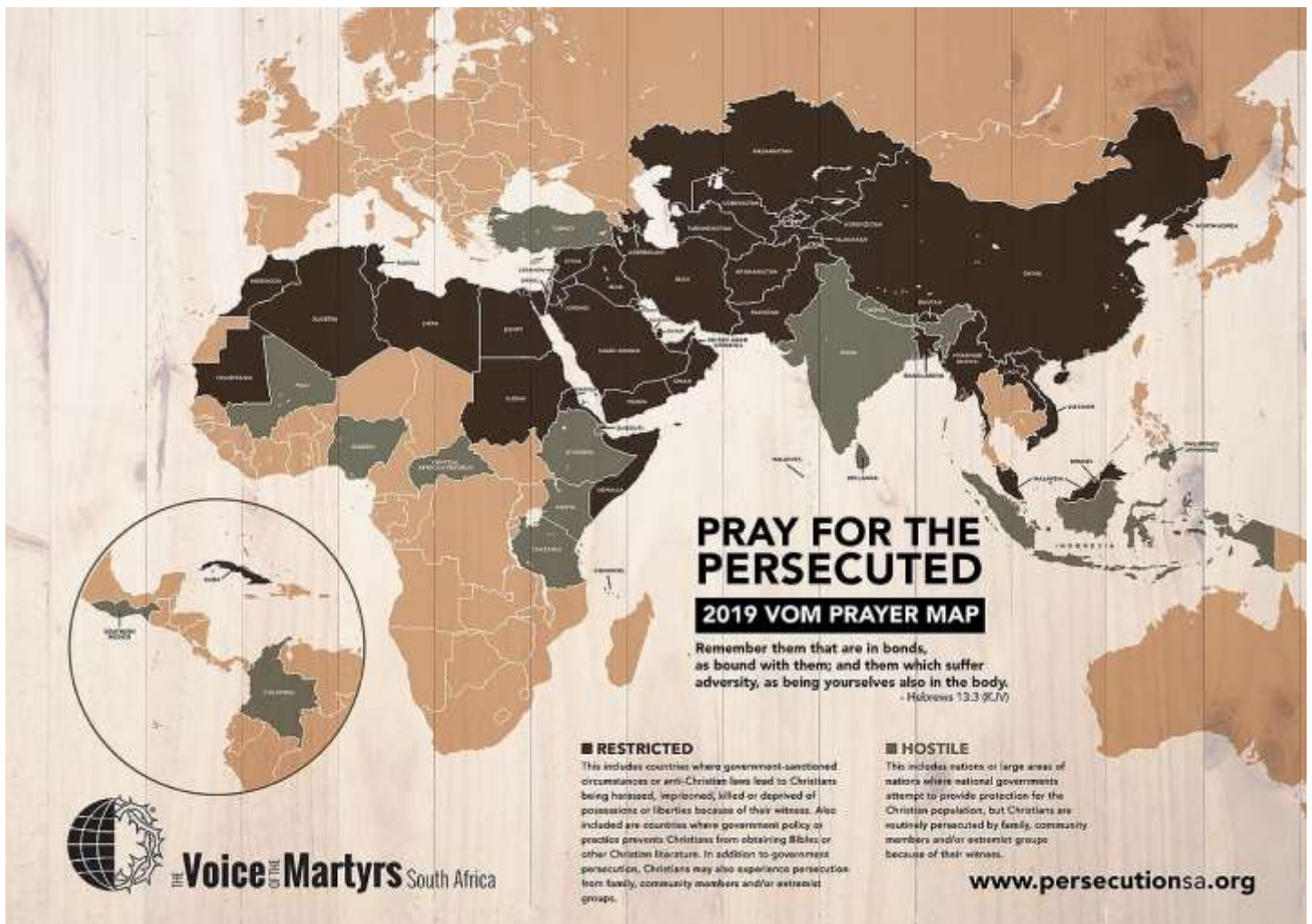
“Brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3).

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective” (James 5:16).

The Church – A Safe Place?

In our message today we are reminded that the Church is not a “safe place” for many Christians in the world as they suffer persecution. But it is also the only “safe place.” In God’s Church, we are safe in the hands of the Savior who promises that no one can snatch us out of his hand (John 10:27-28).

As you look at the map below and see the countries (in black) where Christianity is restricted and other countries (in gray) where Christians are often persecuted by family or community members, may it be an encouragement that we pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ.



Pray for Miracles

Thirty years ago, on November 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall fell. You can see people celebrating on top of the wall late that night.

Do you know why the Berlin Wall crumbled? There are geo-political answers, but the best answer is: God's people prayed.

God's people had prayed for decades that the gospel could be proclaimed in Communist countries. The prospect seemed impossible, but "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).



Miracles Needed Today



Today Christians continue to face persecution. There is an urgent call to pray for Christians in northern Syria who are fleeing as the Turkish backed militias move into the area. Christians in this area experienced genocide during World War I and are fearful of a repetition. At left, a Christian mother carries her belongs with her children behind her as they arrive in a refugee camp near Mosul, Iraq.

At right is a picture of a 3000 seat church in Funan, Anhui, China, that was torn down on October 19, 2019. "It was mid-worship service when the destruction unexpectedly took place, and the church lost all of its property. During the demolition, Christians knelt in front of the authorities, begging them not to tear down the building. The church was not compensated for its loss of property. Authorities claimed that they were renovating the area and suggested that Christians attend other churches. They also claimed that they would rebuild the church in another region. Officials detained the church's pastors, Geng Yimin and Sun Yongyao, on suspicion of 'gathering a crowd to disturb social order.'" (<https://www.chinaaid.org/2019/10/megachurch-demolished-pastors-detained.html>)



Pray for Our Synod's Missions

Pressure continues to grow for the local church because of government policies and actions in East Asia. In fact, churches and Christian schools all throughout the mission field have been shut down. Many missionaries and their families have been forcibly expelled from the region. There is concern for how long our WELS called workers can continue working in the field, but that is not slowing the work down. It has only made us more urgent to empower the local church to share the gospel. Our workers weekly mentor and equip dozens of leaders to reach out, disciple believers, and multiply leaders, and start new groups. More than 900 souls are being served with the gospel each week (<https://wels.net/serving-others/missions/asia/east-asia/>).

Online outreach in a restricted-access country

Imagine a country where it is illegal for churches to gather without special permission, to proclaim any gospel other than what the unbelieving government approves. A country where churches, obviously, cannot do any promotion, canvassing, or big outreach events, where all social media is controlled by the powers that be, and where most everything that is perceived as coming from the West is considered suspect by the authorities. How would you do large-scale outreach and evangelism in a setting like that, especially when you know that there are millions of people in that country who are looking for meaning and are open to spiritual direction?

Believe it or not, one group has still launched an outreach website on the approved social media platform through the help of Multi-Language Publications (MLP). It is not overtly Christian, at least not at first glance. It talks about sports, common marriage problems, and movies that are popular. Each blog post offers simple life advice and insights on these topics to get people's attention and then quotes a relevant Bible passage. Finally, at the bottom of the article there is a link to more information. From there, readers can access a page that tells them more about the Christian message through articles such as "Who is Jesus?" and "What is the Bible?"

There is no way to promote this web page. There is only word of mouth. Praise God that several "Promoters" (outreach-minded brothers and sisters) have agreed to post the weekly articles on their local version of a "Facebook Wall." Praise God that, in the first 12 hours of the first article being released, there were already 753 views! Within a few days, there were over 1,200 views! But, more importantly, 120 people (10%) had gone on to view the article "Who is Jesus?"

The impact in a restricted-access country filled with spiritually curious people is powerful, and it is growing. In fact, this site is the sister of two other sites launched earlier, also with the help of MLP. The one launched in March, a simple discipleship website, had 7,300 visits last month. The second, a leadership training site, had 15,600 visits last month.

Please pray that these sites continue to grow and reach tens of thousands of people every month. Our goal for the first year is 150,000 visitors, and our 3-year goal is 1,000,000. Please pray that these sites are not shut down by the government. Pray that the authors, website manager, and "Promoters" have the courage to continue boldly and clearly proclaiming the gospel. But most of all, pray that the Holy Spirit works through the gospel on these sites to create and strengthen the faith of many people (<https://wels.net/online-outreach-in-a-restricted-access-country/>).