

## significant news for christians

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

# THE Church Around the WORLD

March 2017



American Samoa



## Country in Focus: American Samoa (1)

American Samoa, with some 55,000 inhabitants, consists of 200 square kilometers of archipelago in the Polynesian Pacific. It has been an unincorporated US territory since 1900, and its citizens have all the rights of US citizens except the right to vote in federal elections. They also enjoy complete freedom of religion. The territory's economy is largely traditional Polynesian, with tuna fishing and canning the dominant industries. Remittances sent by Samoans abroad also benefit the economy, allowing American Samoa to experience a higher economic status than Samoa to the west. However, the remoteness of the islands and frequent devastating hurricanes limit economic development.

Pray for:

- The relatively affluent citizens of American Samoa to resist the pull of materialism and find wholehearted commitment to Jesus;
- The evangelical ministries and churches that are making an impact for the Lord;
- Awakening and renewal in the rapidly declining churches that have been affected by recent growth in cults.

## UN Genocide Conventions “Obsolete”

According to the author of a book documenting recent violence against minorities in Iraq and Syria, the UN must urgently put in place measures to hold to account jihadists who have committed such atrocities, because existing conventions have become “obsolete.”

Vienna-based legal counsel Ewelina Ochab, who authored *Never Again: Legal Responses to a Broken Promise in the Middle East*, accused the UN of breaking the pledges it made in the aftermath of World War II to prevent genocide from recurring. Speaking at the book's launch at the UN's Palais des Nations in Geneva, Ochab argued that the conventions on genocide prevention had become “obsolete” because measures had not been taken to bring to justice members of the Islamic State, whose attacks on Christians and other religious minorities amounted to genocide.

## Herdsmen Kill More Christians in Nigeria (2)

Muslim Fulani herdsmen recently killed at least 12 Christians in what Christian leaders call a campaign of ethnic and religious cleansing. The killings took place in four communities of the southern Kaduna state.

The heavily armed herdsmen killed several Christians in one village and then attacked another, killing villagers and destroying their

Continued on page 2

houses. The terrorists burned St. Paul's Catholic Church, and the offices of the ECWA Gidan Waya District Church Council were also destroyed. The arrival of a military helicopter before and after the attacks led many residents to speculate that renegade elements in the Nigerian military were aiding the herdsmen.

## North Korean Defectors Report on Persecution <sup>(3)</sup>

According to North Korean defectors, 75 percent of North Koreans who are persecuted die for their faith. The Database Center for North Korean Human Rights interviewed 11,730 North Korean defectors who had escaped to South Korea.

Practicing any religion that is not sanctioned by the government is punishable by death in North Korea. In fact, 100 percent of all defectors interviewed said there is no religious freedom in the country. Nearly all of the defectors said the only facilities for worship are located in Pyongyang and are simply there as a display for tourists. The defectors also said that 80 percent of those taken into custody by the state disappear and their whereabouts remain unknown.

Christian persecution ministries have advocated for action to be taken to investigate the

human rights abuses perpetrated by North Korea, and North Korea remains number one on the Open Doors World Watch List of countries where persecution of Christians is the worst.

## Iraqi Christians Returning Home Face Bleak Prospects <sup>(4)</sup>

Displaced Iraqi Christians have finally received the go-ahead to return to their native northern Iraq, yet many return home to scenes of devastation. In the village of Karamlis, the bells of Saint Addai Church tolled *their* first time in over two years. But the church received the brunt of ISIS attacks and showed the physical signs of brutality, including charred remains of torched prayer benches, remnants of tombs long since disrespected and scarred, a now-headless likeness of the Virgin Mary, and mountains of glass shards.

Despite the damage, Iraqi Christians gathered to worship, singing hymns and hearing a message of God's light. Saint Addai's Reverend Thabet Habib assured his flock of the village's future, saying, "I stress again in the midst of this destruction, that God is always giving us light to spread peace and love and rebuilding."



## This month you can... Help Keep a Language Alive

**B**uru is an isolated island in the province of Maluku, Indonesia. Due to the high waves of the surrounding sea, it's difficult to access by boat. But for the Buru people, a lack of access to quality education in their language has posed a bigger challenge.

Wycliffe Bible Translators is now working with a partner organization in Maluku to implement education in the mother tongue

for Buru children. Helping children read and write in their own language will help preserve the Buru language and culture. It will also open the door for Buru people to be able to read God's Word in their heart language.

Team members are training tutors, producing teaching materials, and launching mother-tongue-based kindergartens in Buru communities. The goal is to see Buru people enthusiastically

using their heart language in all areas of their lives—at home, in public places, in schools, and in churches.

Your prayers and investment will help preserve the Buru culture and language and equip people to read God's Word in their heart language, through education in the mother tongue! For more information on how to get involved, visit [www.wycliffe.org](http://www.wycliffe.org).



The Church Around  
the WORLD

After the village fell to ISIS in 2014, many residents were displaced, their homes were destroyed, and they were forced to live in nearby Mosul in refugee camps, with myriad others having fled even farther abroad.

## Christian Hospitals Opt Out of Canada's Euthanasia Law <sup>(5)</sup>

Two Christian hospitals in Winnipeg, Manitoba, have opted out of the assisted-suicide law passed by Canada's Liberal government in June. Concordia Hospital, a Mennonite institution, and St. Boniface Hospital, a Catholic facility, announced they will refer those seeking assisted suicide to other groups.

"We are committed to providing respect and dignity in care to every person throughout his or her life from conception to natural death," Concordia Hospital stated. "Concordia believes that providing healthcare is a ministry assigned to us by Christ and is expressive of our Anabaptist faith, values, and ethics."

Although the law allows for conscience protections for hospitals, not everyone approves of the waiver. Arthur Schafer, director of the University of Manitoba's Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics, said hospitals should be forced to comply with the law. "The people who work within those institutions have a conscience, the institution doesn't," he told CBC News. "Their belief, which is a legitimate religious conviction they have, shouldn't be imposed on patients, doctors, nurses, or the

general public."

When Bill C-14 became law this summer, it legalized assisted suicide in two ways: A physician or nurse practitioner can administer a lethal injection or prescribe pills a patient can self-administer. Those seeking either method must be at least 18 years old, have "a grievous or irremediable medical condition," and consent to die.

Five US states—Oregon, Washington, Vermont, California, and Colorado—currently have laws legalizing assisted suicide.

## US Abortion Rate Falls to Lowest in Decades <sup>(6)</sup>

The US abortion rate has decreased to its lowest level in decades according to a new report. In 1971, two years prior to the ruling in *Roe v. Wade* legalizing abortion, the Centers for Disease Control reported a low abortion rate, but that rate went up dramatically by 1980, when there were 25 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44. In 2013, however, the abortion rate dropped to half of what it was in 1980. Only 12.5 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 44 were recorded in 2013. The total estimate of abortions in all 50 states in 2013 was 900,000.

## Connecticut Teacher Forced to Remove Bible Verse Display <sup>(6)</sup>

A Connecticut public charter school asked one of its employees to remove the display

of a Bible verse on her profile outside a classroom after the nation's largest atheist group, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), complained to the school's board of directors.

Jumoke Academy Charter School in Hartford, Connecticut, told an academic assistant to remove the verse Philippians 4:13, which reads, "I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me," after FFRF wrote a complaint letter to the school's board of directors, claiming the display outside one of the school's classrooms was "unconstitutional."

"Public schools may not advance, prefer or promote religion," FFRF managing staff attorney Rebecca Markert wrote to James Michel, the chair of the board. "Courts have continually held that school districts may not display religious messages or iconography in public schools."

Troy Monroe, executive director of Jumoke Academy, responded to the letter by saying, "After reviewing the letter, the issue of concern was investigated and the employee of concern was met with. As a result of our investigation and conversation with the employee, the posting was removed and the employee was reminded that Jumoke Academy is a public school and must be in compliance with the regulations concerning separation of church and state."

## Over 170,000 Hear the Gospel in Myanmar <sup>(7)</sup>

Over 170,000 people gathered in Yangon, Myanmar, to hear leading evangelist Franklin Graham preach the gospel at the three-night Yangon Love Joy Peace Festival. The Billy Graham

Evangelistic Association reports that people turned out by the masses for each of the three nights of the event in the Buddhist-majority nation. Additionally, the organization says 7,600 individuals made decisions for Christ over the course of the three-night worship event, which over 440 local churches participated in.

## Survey: US Evangelical Leaders Expect Persecution <sup>(6)</sup>

Recently, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) conducted a survey of US church leaders "about their experience with persecution and their projections for the future." The survey revealed that a high percentage expect persecution of Christians to increase.

Only 32 percent of those leaders surveyed said they've been persecuted themselves, but 76 percent think they will be persecuted "in the coming years." Of the 32 percent who say they already experience persecution, 92 percent think it will continue. And of the majority, 68 percent think persecution is coming. Where evangelical leaders elaborated, most respondents indicated that they are thinking mainly of social, financial, and political pressure, not physical violence.

NAE's survey used the English Oxford Living Dictionary's definition of *persecution*, which is "hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs; oppression."

*To check out books and other church resources, please visit [www.TyndaleDirect.com](http://www.TyndaleDirect.com).*

**I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them.**

1 TIMOTHY 2:1