

The Link



October 2020



Shanklin United Reformed Church www.shanklinurc.co.uk

View From Number 10



A heart filled with thankfulness.

There has been a lot of focus this month on the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower which carried the forerunners of our non-conformist traditions to a new life across the Atlantic. Sadly, they were hounded out through fierce persecution from the state and the established church. After some had fled to the Netherlands for several years, a group set off across the Atlantic to find new freedom to exercise their faith.

After a few false starts, 102 of those radical puritans set off from Plymouth on the *Mayflower* on 6th September 1620, along with a crew of about 30. After 10 arduous weeks at sea in very cramped conditions they finally reached America, dropping anchor off Cape Cod on 11th November 1620.



Sadly, only half survived that first winter, with the kind help of the indigenous people. The following year they celebrated their first harvest in 'New England' with great thankfulness to God – and so began the American tradition of Thanksgiving, which is still the major family event of the year. That early relationship with the local people broke down and history tells us

of abuses by the colonialists, as in many other parts of the world.

Harvest does not perhaps mean so much to most of us in the modern world where we get our food from all over the planet. For many however, the success of their crops is still vital to survival. God instructed the Israelites to pause and to give thanks as they harvested the first fruits and also when the final crops were safely gathered in. It was important to remember they had been brought from slavery and through the wilderness in order to reach this 'land flowing with milk and honey' –a figure of speech!

We must never take for granted the food we eat and the basics of

life that we enjoy – like clean water in our taps. Let us take time to thank God and also to consider how we can help others around us and far away who don't have this basic food security.



May we always have an attitude of gratitude!,

Bia

Are we nearly there yet? - Elders' Update

Quite a few churches around us have begun to hold simple services since the rules were loosened in July. The Elders have been prayerfully exploring the way forward for us as we recognise that we could not hold a meeting that in any way resembled our normal Sunday morning together.

As churches have been encouraged to avoid large numbers and continue to live stream, it does not feel appropriate for us to try and put on anything on a Sunday morning as yet.

As we go to print, we are thinking it may be time to start up a couple of meetings so that people can gather for some kind of worship, while still observing social distance. It feels right to resume Bible Bite meetings at church on a Tuesday, without the lunch for the time being – so perhaps starting at 14:00.

So as to keep a three day gap between meetings and so avoid a full Covid cleaning operation, we suggest that we might hold a second meeting on a Saturday afternoon, perhaps around 16:00, following the same theme but in a more inspirational and outward looking style. Both would be around 40 minutes – please look out for details as we meet again to confirm the plans and make sure we have everything in place to keep everyone safe.

See the next page for more details about how things will be different... ***(all this is contingent on any Government changes!)***

The New Normal in Church



Based on the guidelines published by the Government and the URC, there are many restrictions as to what we can do and we would need to run things in a carefully organised manner. Here is a summary of some key points:

- People would be asked to book a place for one or other meeting each week so we can control numbers.
- Only 30 - 40 could really be accommodated safely depending on the configuration of household groups.
- Name & contact details will be held for 21 days.
- Entry to the building will be via the front doors only (and disabled access ramp).
- Everyone will be asked to sanitise their hands upon entry.
- Face coverings are required (exceptions apply)
- We will increase ventilation wherever possible (opening windows etc.)
- You will be shown to a seat – rows are now spaced
- Seats will be allocated on the basis of household groupings sitting together, with two spaces between any others
- Please move to your seat promptly. Once in your seat, you are asked to remain there and not to move around the building
- Social distancing must be strictly adhered to (including when queuing for entry and exit) and interaction with those outside your household should be avoided.
- Young people must be supervised by a parent or guardian
- Please use drinking/washing/toilet facilities at home to avoid using the facilities in the church. However, toilet facilities will be available for those who do need them; please come to the back and wait to be shown to the toilet. You will be asked to sanitise your hands before entry and on exit and also to use the wipes provided on any surfaces you may have touched
- Shared items such as Bibles will not be used, and we will provide single-use items where necessary. Please take these with you when

you leave

- There will be no congregational singing during services. All speaking/singing will take place from the front or via videos
- No offering will be taken in services but a receptacle will be available for gifts as you arrive or leave.

Please remember that HM Government currently advises all those over the age of 70 should stay at home as much as possible and all those in higher-risk groups should avoid large gatherings.

Government guidelines also suggest that services should be completed in the shortest reasonable time. Once the service is over, you should leave the building immediately via the front and side doors, beginning with those sitting furthest back. Be patient and ensure that you maintain the appropriate distance whilst waiting to leave and sanitise your hands once again on exit.

There will be no tea/coffee facilities. We would ask you to leave the building promptly once the service is over and, to avoid queues, to leave the vicinity of the building as soon as possible.

To protect the most vulnerable in our fellowship, we must all adhere to these guidelines

To ensure that cross-contamination does not take place the building will be closed for around 72 hours before another meeting or service.



Prayer



Tuesday Prayer at 19:30 is now held via Zoom using the same account as for the live service broadcasts – see the opposite page for details.

It has been great to have a good number sharing together each week – do please join us if you are able – you can ring in from an ordinary phone which is a normal landline charge.

Do continue to use our **Prayer Chain** if there are urgent and important issues that need prayer. Phone Hazel on 865181 – or Jean on 863850 - do please consider joining this if you are around at home.

Prayer 2020



**Everyone is encouraged to pray at 20:20
on the 20th of each month in 2020
for 20 minutes!**

*Pray that God will give many opportunities
to speak about Christ
Colossians 4:3*

Put it on the calendar to remind you...
it's on a **Tuesday** this month!

Live Streaming of Services



During this period when we cannot meet for worship, we are streaming services via Facebook Live – just search for Shanklin United Reformed Church.

Sundays at 11:00

Tuesdays at 14:00 29th Sept (check for details thereafter)

You don't have to be a Facebook user to access a Facebook Page – just use this link and it should take you in...

www.facebook.com/pg/ShanklinUnitedReformedChurch

Tune in and watch – and feel that sense of togetherness during the live broadcast. If you are Facebook user you can share your greetings and thoughts on the screen as it goes along.

Those not on the internet can also access the audio feed via the Zoom Video Conferencing facility on their ordinary phone line.

If you want to phone in to listen, please dial:

02034 815240

or 02030 512874 (an alternative line)



Follow the instructions and when prompted for the meeting:

ID: press 324 266 5584 then #

for Participant ID: just press #

for Password: press 936536 then #

Do consider inviting someone round to watch a service (at social distance) who is not able to access the internet - a group of six is allowed! (all at social distance) This is a way of sharing a bit of much needed fellowship

Audio and video recordings of our recent services can be found on our website at:

www.shanklinurc.co.uk/sermons

Thanks to Pete, Malc and Colin for making all this possible.



Forgiveness

In August, Simon Morris pointed out that we should not imagine that evil only exists “out there” in an evil world but that it is indeed resident in our human hearts. More recently, Brian has spoken of our need to release ourselves from the grip of unforgiveness; to be merciful and to forgive others as we ourselves have been forgiven.

- In Ezekiel 36:26 God says, *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”*
- In Matthew 6:14 Jesus says, *“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.”*
- In Romans 12:18 Paul says, *“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*

We have seen in Neil Anderson’s articles that we are free to make choices and to choose who will be our guide. The Freedom in Christ course (and, for many of us, our own personal experiences) makes it clear that one of the biggest barriers to fully receiving God’s gift of freedom is unforgiveness in our hearts. Here are Neil’s thoughts on this topic and how we might deal with it.

Dear Lord, we want to commit ourselves afresh to you today. We ask you to bring to mind any sinfulness we have not dealt with. We are sorry for this and ask for your forgiveness.

Show us any unforgiveness which remains in our hearts. Help us to forgive and cleanse us by the power of your Spirit. We ask this in the name of your son, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Amen.

The Choice of Forgiveness (28th August 2019)

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Ephesians 4:32)

Most of the ground that Satan gains in the lives of Christians is due to unforgiveness. We are warned to forgive others so that Satan cannot take advantage of us (2 Corinthians 2:10,11). God requires us to forgive others from our hearts or He will turn us over to the tormentors (Matthew 18:34,35).

Why is forgiveness so critical to our freedom? Because of the cross!

God didn't give us what we deserve; He gave us what we needed according to His mercy. We are to be merciful just as our heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36). We are to forgive as we have been forgiven (Ephesians 4:31,32). Forgiveness is not forgetting. People who try to forget find that they cannot. God says He will "remember no more" our sins (Hebrews 10:17), but God, being omniscient, cannot forget. "Remember no more" means that God will never use the past against us (Psalm 103:12). Forgetting may be a result of forgiveness, but it is never the means of forgiveness. When we bring up the past and use it against others, we haven't forgiven them. Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will. We choose to face and acknowledge the hurt and the hate in order to forgive from the heart.

Since God requires us to forgive, it is something we can do (He would never require us to do something we cannot do). But forgiveness is difficult for us because it pulls against our concept of justice. We want revenge for offences suffered. But we are told never to take our own revenge (Romans 12:19). "Why should I let them off the hook?" we protest. You let them off your hook, but they are never off God's hook. He will deal with them fairly - something we cannot do. If you don't let offenders off your hook, you are hooked to them and the past, and that just means continued pain for you.

Stop the pain; let it go. You don't forgive someone merely for his or her sake; you do it for your sake so you can be free. Your need to forgive isn't an issue between you and the offender; it's between you and God.

Lord, I stand amazed at the example of Your forgiveness. I desire to grow in my willingness to forgive those who have hurt me.

The Cost and the Process of Forgiveness

(29th August 2019 & 28th February 2020)

***Forgive your brother from your heart* (Matthew 18:35)**

***Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you* (Luke 6:27,28)**

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. Forgiveness is costly; we pay the price of the evil we forgive. Yet you're going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the bondage of bitterness or the freedom of forgiveness. That's how Jesus forgave you. He took the consequences of your sin upon Himself. All true forgiveness is substitutional, because no one really forgives without bearing the penalty of the other person's sin.

Why then do we forgive? Because Christ forgave us!

God the Father "*made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,*" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Where is the justice? The cross makes forgiveness legally and morally right: "*For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all.*" (Romans 6:10)

How do you forgive from the heart? First, you acknowledge the hurt and the hate. If your forgiveness doesn't visit the emotional core of your past, it will be incomplete. This is the great evangelical cover-up. Christians feel the pain of interpersonal offences, but we won't acknowledge it. Let God bring the pain to the surface so He can deal with it. This is where the healing takes place.

Ask God to bring to your mind those you need to forgive and make a list of all those who have offended you. Since God has forgiven them by His grace, you can forgive them too. Keep praying about each individual until you are sure that all the remembered pain has been dealt with. Don't try to rationalize or explain the offender's behaviour.

Forgiveness deals with your pain, not another's behaviour: positive feelings will follow in time; freeing yourself from the past is the critical

issue.

Here are 12 simple steps you can use to walk through the process of forgiving someone who hurt you in the past:

1. Ask God to reveal to your mind the people you need to forgive and make a list.
2. Acknowledge the hurt and the hate. To forgive from your heart (as Jesus instructed) you must let God search the depths of your heart.
3. Understand the significance of the cross. It is the cross of Christ that makes forgiveness legally and morally right (Hebrews 10:10).
4. Decide that you will bear the burden of each person's sin; not using past information against them (Proverbs 17:9 & Luke 6:27-34)
5. Decide to forgive. Forgiveness is a conscious choice to let someone off the hook; to get on with your life; to walk away free in Christ.
6. Take your list of names to God and Pray the following:
"Heavenly Father, I forgive _____ for _____ because it made me feel _____"
7. Destroy the list. You are now free. Your forgiveness is between you and God (unless someone has asked you for forgiveness).
8. Don't expect your decision to forgive to result in major changes in other people. Instead, pray for them (Matthew 5:44 & 2 Corinthians 2:7)
9. Try to understand the people you have forgiven but never rationalise away the sin.
10. Forgiveness is not about feeling good, it is about being free! In time you will be able to think about the people who offended you without feeling hurt or anger.
11. Thank God for the lessons you have learned and the maturity you have gained ~ now you can grow as a Christian!
12. If appropriate, confess your part in any sin and know that you are forgiven (1 John 1:9). If someone has something against you, go

to that person and seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-26).

Lord, teach me how to love unconditionally and quickly forgive those who hate me, curse me or mistreat me. I desire to be free from the hurt and the hate of offences in my past. Today I move beyond desiring to forgive and ask Your help to forgive.

Neil Anderson

Freedom in Christ Ministries

Daily Devotionals

Used by permission

I have been through this process and I can say that it works! It takes time and it can cause some turmoil, but I find that if you take that to the Lord, He will help you to overcome it. You may find it useful to talk to someone before, during, or after this process. Please speak to Brian, me, or any one of the elders who will be happy to help you through it.

Robin

Giving

Our monthly offerings are not as consistent as usual but we are so grateful to all of you who have continued to give so generously.

If you normally give in the weekly offertory, please consider dropping your gifts:

- through Colin or Rob's letter box: *20 Victoria Avenue or 25 St Paul's Crescent*

- or by using BACS:

Shanklin URC Sort Code 30-97-42 Account 00011024

Reference - *add Surname & "Gift" if it needs to be linked for Gift Aid*

If you are not able to get your gifts to us then please do set them aside and pass them over when things begin to return to some sort of normality. If your income has suffered – please don't feel any pressure to keep up the same level of giving. We do understand.

Volunteers Recover Lost Bible Translations

Having the Bible available on our phones or laptops is normal for most of us, and it's incredibly useful – it's always available, we can cut and paste text, compare translations and find verses easily.



But there are many languages where that's not possible, even when a translation exists. There might be a printed Bible or New Testament, but it's never been digitised or the digital copy might have been lost.

That's why the Bible Society has teamed up with Wycliffe and MissionAssist on an exciting project designed to make hundreds of Bibles available to people online for the first time.

Spearheaded by MissionAssist, the Bible Digitisation Project recruits volunteers who will copy the scanned text of printed Scriptures manually onto a computer at home. They don't need to be linguists or expert computer users, but they do need to be accurate and able to concentrate hard.

Volunteers work independently in pairs on the same text, and their results are collated and checked against the original printed text and corrected as needed by another volunteer to ensure the highest possible level of accuracy. There are no set hours – some do a few hours a week, while others do much more.

Digitising Bibles means they can be made freely available on major platforms like YouVersion. It also means earlier translations can be revised and unfinished projects completed, so it's a gift for Bible translators; and Braille versions can be produced for blind people.

Bringing the Bible to life in today's world is a big undertaking and the Bible Society needs your help, e.g. by joining the Bible a Month Club. Get involved at:

www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/

Source: [Bible Society](#)
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Harvest Appeal 2020

Harvest celebrations will be a little different this year but the elders would still like to encourage you to respond generously...

After our recent successful appeal for Kalasa, we thought it would be good to concentrate nearer to home during Harvest and are suggesting we direct our gifts towards the Isle of Wight Foodbank. There has been a significant demand for their services recently!



- ◆ Donations can be made at IoW Foodbank website: <https://isleofwight.foodbank.org.uk/>
- ◆ You can send a cheque payable to 'IW Foodbank' to IoW Foodbank, Love Lane, Cowes, PO31 7ET
- ◆ Or call 01983 292040 for their bank account details.

Alternatively, you can pop a cheque (payable to Shanklin URC) or cash into Robin or Colin and we will forward it on. Please mark your envelope 'Harvest Appeal'.

Thank You

We cannot accept the usual gifts of food but we would ask you to continue to support the Foodbank through bins in local supermarkets.

Currently, they have urgent need of:

Tins of potatoes, spaghetti, custard, carrots, mixed vegetables and peas plus hand wash/gel and laundry tablets/powder.

Thank You Again!

Double Your Money!

There is a huge demand for God's Word in China, where in spite of severe persecution the church is growing faster than we can possibly imagine, with a million people coming to faith every year indeed to people will have committed their lives to Jesus before you finish reading this article!

Bible Society has a generous supporter who will match donations given for this cause – if you'd like to know more, I will gladly share about this amazing opportunity

Blessings Jane H (☎ 864279)

Azerbaijani Church Allowed to Meet

Pastor Hamid Shabanov in Azerbaijan has been informed by the State Committee for Work with Religious Organisations that his Baptist church in the village of Aliabad will be allowed to meet for two hours each Saturday morning.

For 25 years these brave believers have sought legal status – but were repeatedly ignored or denied by the authorities. Police regularly raided their church meetings and seized Christian literature. However, despite the opposition, the church continued to gather for teaching and worship while attempting to get official status. We thank God for their perseverance and for this wonderful answer to prayer.

Connection Quiz

1. In a cult children's TV series, Scott, Virgil, Alan, Gordon and John worked for which organisation?
2. In the TV series M*A*S*H, what did the "M" stand for?
3. What is the name of a sacred river in India?
4. In medical terms, triangular, spiral and tubular are examples or methods of what?
5. And so finally, what is the **connection** between the answers to questions 1 - 4?

Answers are on [Page 27](#)



Who Will Remember the Prisoners?

This month we would like to share with you some of the news we receive from **Release International**, both in their excellent magazine and in their **news updates**.

Firstly, a country that as a Church we prayed for a few year ago in **Release's Pray 173 campaign**, which was calling Christians to pray for the **173 prisoners** in **Eritrea** who had been in prison for at least 10 years. This month's '**Focus**' also gives news of this country.

To quote Release:

"In the impoverished country of Eritrea – home to over 100,000 evangelical Christians who are often subjected to severe persecution, torture and imprisonment for their faith – persecution and strict Covid-19 lockdown orders have pushed many prisoners of faith and their families to the edge of survival.

These courageous brothers and sisters in Christ have turned away from government-approved faiths and maintained their love for Jesus at a huge cost to themselves and their families.

Right now, our partners serving prisoners of faith in Eritrea are asking us to pray urgently for them and to help their families as they struggle to survive.

Because of the severe lockdown restrictions prisoners of faith are not receiving any of the food cooked by local Christian women who make simple meals for those in nearby prisons. Food shortages in prison are a massive problem and many inmates are facing starvation.

The situation is no better for the prisoners' families who cannot afford the rising food prices and desperately need our help"

Secondly, News from **Pakistan** from **Pastor A**, (a fellow worker with '**W**', one of Release's partners in this country) and what happened to him when he was recently detained for 6 days by police for standing up for persecuted Christians.

My Time in Prison

Pastor A shares the Gospel with wonderful results

Wednesday

“This is the first time in my life I have been sent to prison. My only ‘crime’ was to help two of my church members whose property was being attacked by the police. Today I was mocked and beaten, after I told my fellow prisoners that I am a pastor and I have not done anything wrong.

The authorities moved me to another cell where there were already Christians. I told my story to my fellow prisoners straightaway, which was some help. Ten people were crowded into a tiny cell. It was a vey cramped space, dirty, smelly and vey unhygienic.

I started to talk with everyone. I found out that most of the prisoners were here for small crimes like pickpocketing, stealing, fighting and so on. I also discovered that some of the prisoners had actually completed sentences – but had no one to help them secure their release.

In the evening I suggested we pray together, but we did not have a Bible. I recited some Psalms and sang a little, before praying for all the prisoners and even for the jail management. A guard was listening throughout and told his colleagues about our prayers for them.

Thursday

At 10:00 we were taken to different parts of the prison to work. Everybody was assigned physical tasks. I was taken to the Superintendent who wanted to know more about me. After that I was treated much better.

Sunday

I asked the Superintendent for permission to hold a Sunday service, which was granted. Some 80% of the Christian prisoners were allowed to take part, around 160 prisoners.

We sang psalms and hymns and I preached for about half an hour. Some 22 prisoners repented and came to the Lord – what a joyful day! Lastly I prayed for all prisoners, their families and the jail management. The Christian were very happy, since this was the first time a Sunday service had been held in the jail.

I was so glad and realised that this was the reason why I was in prison. I believe it was God's plan to send me to jail to be a witness for Christ – and for me to find out more about prison life by experiencing it."

Please pray for strength and protection for Release partner 'W' and his colleague Pastor A. Praise God for the 22 prisoners who responded to the gospel message – pray for their ongoing discipleship and release in due course.



Thirdly for the **Church in China** where there is increasing persecution

"The Chinese authorities have stepped up their persecution of unofficial and official churches alike.

Authorities have banned online services and preaching and officials have also accelerated their programme to remove and demolish crosses from church buildings, according to Release partner China Aid. Pastors have also been detained for organising online prayer meetings.

Our partner reports that the authorities demolished at least two churches at Easter. Officials tore down the state-sanctioned Donghu Church in Qinghai province, the oldest and largest in its district - and a private home used for a house church in Hunan province.

Donghu Church had 300 members and was the oldest and largest church in its district. The building was demolished due to alleged 'safety concerns'.

However, China Aid says the Christians refuse to be dismayed. 'The government can destroy the building, but they can never destroy the



Members of the state approved Donghu Church.
Photo: China Aid.

faith in their hearts.'

Our partner also reports that several members of Early Rain Covenant Church in Chengdu, Sichuan, were arrested at home on Good Friday as they watched online services.

Pray for Joshua

*We've received reports that the young son of imprisoned Chinese pastor **Wang Yi** of the **Early Rain Covenant Church** is being taken daily by police car to a Chinese Communist Party school for 're-education' or **brainwashing** – most likely in retaliation for his father not*

compromising his faith while in prison.

Please pray for Joshua Shuya Wang, his father and also his mother Jiang Rong, who is under surveillance by the authorities 24 hours a day.

Pastor Wang Yi is the influential leader of Early Rain Covenant Church in the city of Chengdu, Sichuan province – one of the best known churches in China.

During a police raid in December 2018 he and his wife, Jiang Rong, were arrested and detained along with around 100 members of their church. The pastor was charged with 'inciting subversion of state power' and 'illegal business operations'.

In December 2019 he was convicted of those crimes, fined and sentenced to nine years in prison. A former law professor, Pastor Wang has been outspoken in calling on the state to uphold religious liberties.

According to Wang, this persecution - while evil - is actually pushing many Chinese people to 'lose faith in their future, leading them to a desert of spiritual disillusionment and through this to know Jesus.

The continuing restrictions and concerns over the coronavirus are

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challenging to us in the West, but for our brothers and sisters it is bringing increasing discrimination and persecution. **Please Pray** – that is the support they so long for – and if you felt able to respond to the huge and increasing needs, **Release International** would be so grateful, if you would like more information, I would gladly supply you with details or giving (☎ 864379)

Also the **July – Sept** magazine gives wonderful testimonies of the persecuted Church and more details of they stories in this article - do let me know if you'd like a copy and of the new quarter (**Oct – Dec**) which will be available shortly.

Lastly, a prayer to share;

Lord Jesus

In the tumult and chaos, You are a haven of peace. Thank you.

Jesus, please remind my precious persecuted brothers and sisters that You are their hiding place, that you are all they need. You know the end from the beginning, even and especially when they cannot see the way ahead. 'Your purpose will stand' (Isaiah 46:10).

In the midst of the storm, Lord, guide and comfort them; may they hear your voice.

Amen

Loving greetings to all in our Church family

Jane H (on behalf of the Prayer Group for the Persecuted)

*Source: Release International
Used by permission*



Standing Strong Online 2020

Sat 3rd October 2020, 19:45

On Saturday 3rd October, Open Doors invite you to join them – and thousands of believers from across the UK and Ireland – for an evening of inspiration, encouragement, and stories of courageous faith from persecuted Christians around the world.

Open Doors' annual Standing Strong events can't take place in person this year – but they're delighted to host an online evening gathering featuring the interviews, stories, praise and prayer that have made Standing Strong so memorable for many years.

At Standing Strong Online they will bring you the latest news on what's happening to our brothers and sisters in Syria, Nigeria and China through interviews with church leaders and footage direct from our partners around the world.

So, join them on Saturday 3rd October as they pray, learn and worship together with our persecuted family and find out how their courageous faith can strengthen us all.

Register today to attend the free online live event at www.opendoorsuk.org/news/standing-strong-2020/standing-strong-online/



FOCUS

News on our Christian Brothers & Sisters who are being persecuted in Eritrea

World Watch List Number: 6

27 Christians imprisoned in Eritrea released on bail

The Eritrean government has released on bail 27 Christians imprisoned because of their faith. They have been detained without trial for varying terms between four and 16 years. However, conditions are attached to the release and the majority have been sent back into indefinite national service.

Earlier this month, 27 Christians imprisoned in Eritrea because of their faith were released on bail by the country's government.

The 19 men and eight women – all from Evangelical and Pentecostal backgrounds – left Mai Serwa Prison, outside the capital city Asmara, on 4th and 8th September. They had been detained without trial for various terms between four and 16 years.

Unusual development

"The cycle of arrest and release is not anything new," said an Open Doors spokesperson, of the release. "But what makes this unusual is the fact that those released have been inside for quite long." Reports have suggested the release is linked to coronavirus, however Open Doors sources have not been able to verify this.

"What makes this unusual is the fact that those released have been inside for quite long." for quite long." *Open Doors Spokesperson*

Release was granted only after the Christians handed over property documents and signed a 'some kind of declaration that usually includes a promise to cease religious activities', the spokesperson said.

Open Doors sources have been told by local sources that, on

leaving prison, most of the Christians were sent back into national service. In Eritrea, national service is compulsory for every citizen, but the duration is indefinite and can often be in inhumane conditions and without enough salary to cover essentials. It's a key reason why Eritreans flee the country.

Increasing interference and restrictions

Despite Christians making up almost half the country's population, Eritrea is number 6 on the World Watch List, putting it amongst the most dangerous places in the world to be a Christian.

The country only recognises four religious groups – Christian Orthodox, Lutheran Church, Catholic Church and Sunni Islam – which come under tight government control. Christians not part of these groups are considered agents of the West and a threat to the state.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom states that Eritrea is a 'Country of Particular Concern', with religious freedom conditions worsening in 2019 following 'increasing interference in and restrictions on religious groups'.

"Christians not part of these groups are considered agents of the West and a threat to the state."

Last summer, at least 150 Eritrean Christians were arrested by government officials. This included 70 members (among them 35 women and 10 children) of Faith Mission Church of Christ in Keren, Eritrea's second city. They were taken to Ashufera prison, 25km from the city, which is made up of a vast underground system of tunnels in which the living conditions are very harsh.

Unclear picture

The US State Department estimates that there are between 1,200 and 3,000 prisoners held because of their faith. But in truth it is impossible to get an accurate figure. No official statistics are available and prisoners are never formally charged. Local sources report that there are hundreds of long-term prisoners, with thousands more detained in waves over shorter periods.

Source: Open Doors

The Puzzle Pages

Sudoku

A numerical placement puzzle!

To solve it you need to fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

	9						3	
2								4
	5		4		9		2	
4	6			9			5	1
7								3
3			2	5	1			7
	7		6		4		8	
6								9
		3					1	

1		2			3		4			5		6
								7				
8			9									
10		11				12		13			14	
					15							
16				17					18			19
20	21			22				23		24		25
26			27								28	
			29									
30						31						

Last Month's Sudoku - how did you do?

5	8	4	2	6	3	1	7	9
3	2	1	8	7	9	6	5	4
6	7	9	5	1	4	8	3	2
7	5	8	1	3	2	4	9	6
4	9	6	7	5	8	3	2	1
2	1	3	9	4	6	7	8	5
9	6	2	4	8	7	5	1	3
1	3	7	6	9	5	2	4	8
8	4	5	3	2	1	9	6	7

Across

- 1 God's own county (9)
- 7 Main artery going to the heart (5)
- 8 Last book of the Bible (10)
- 10 Nationality of the Muppet's chef (7)
- 13 A toxophilist (6)
- 15 French for 'and' (2)
- 16 Bill & Hilary Clinton's daughter (7)
- 18 '*Road to - Pier*' - by George Orwell (5)
- 20 ♀ - a deer, a female deer (3)
- 22 Alternative, additional (5)
- 24 An oven that's used e.g. in pottery (4)
- 26 Propel something with force (5)
- 28 French word which in the wine world means 'not

sweet' (3)

29 Danish construction toy (4)

30 Thames, Medina, Seine, Orne for example (5)

31 French for 'weekend' (7)

Down

1 Town in Flanders, Belgium (5)

2 Our minister's abbreviated title (3)

3 Recovering from illness (5)

4 Precipitation (4)

5 Noah had one (3)

6 Someone who makes bread (5)

7 One of Jesus' disciples (6)

9 Not the beginning (3)

11 A city in Devon, near the M5 (6)

12 A London airport (8)

14 A Scottish delicacy (6)

16 39th US President (6)

17 Not faster (6)

19 City in north east France (5)

21 Word used to express a range of emotions (2)

23 Did The Beatles have a ticket to here on the Island? (4)

25 French for 'the' *m* (2)

27 A Spanish exclamation of approval (3)

Logic Quiz Answers - from September's issue

1. Moses didn't take anything onto the ark - it was Noah
 2. All months have 28 days
 3. 70
 4. 1 hour
 5. Half way, the dog would then be running out
 6. The USA, UK & France all have a 4th July
 7. The bear will be white
 8. You would light the match first
 9. One a year
 10. You can't bury a living person
-

General Knowledge Quiz (answers next month)

1. Where was the Magna Carta signed?
2. When did the UK adopt decimal currency?
3. Who was the first Briton to win the Formula 1 World Championship?
4. Who was Prime Minister when Edward VIII abdicated?
5. What is Postman Pat's surname?
6. Which Belgian cyclist was also called 'The Cannibal'?
7. In what year & where did the Battle of Agincourt take place?
8. What date is regarded as Battle of Britain day?
9. Where was King William I born?
10. The 1923 play 'The Ghost Train' was written by which member of the original 'Dad's Army' cast?
11. How tall is the Eiffel Tower, in metres?
12. The Berlin Wall came down in 1989, but in what year was it built?
13. Which locomotive holds the record as the fastest steam engine in the world?
14. Who composed the operetta 'Die Fledermaus'?

Cover Picture

This month's cover features:
the war memorial on Sandown Esplanade

Last Issue's Crossword - how did you do?

F	R	A	N	C	E		F	E	R	R	A	R	I
A		R			T	A	L		A		F		R
R	A	T			H		A		G		T		K
T		I	N	D	I	A	N	Q	U	E	E	N	S
H		C			C			U			R		O
I	D	U	N		S	C	H	E	M	E			M
N		L				A		E				B	E
G	O	A	L			T	R	E	N	T	E		E
		T		S		P					D		A
B	R	E	N	T	F	O	R	D			G	A	R
O				U		O		O			A	T	F
B	L	U	E	B	E	L	L			G	R	E	A

Please note that the **DEADLINE** for contributions for the next magazine is:

Sunday 18th October

Contributions can be emailed at anytime up to the deadline to the editor using the **new email address** at:

surc.thelink@btinternet.com

Answers to This Month's Connections Quiz

1. Scott, etc worked for International Rescue.
2. The M in M*A*S*H stands for Mobile.
3. The Indian river is the Ganges.
4. Triangular, etc are Bandages.
5. And the connection is... they all have hidden words for groups of people

