

## Louisiana PD Stops Hosting Prayer Vigils (6)

Prayer vigils will no longer be hosted or promoted by police in Shreveport, Louisiana. That's according to city attorney William Bradford, in response to a letter from a national nonprofit that advocates for the separation of church and state.

The Shreveport Times reports that the Freedom from Religion Foundation wrote Shreveport police chief Alan Crump in August saying that hosting the vigils suggests the department "prefers religion over nonreligion," thereby violating the Constitution.

Bradford says officers still can attend vigils independently.

The police chief is also a pastor at the Republican Missionary Baptist Church, and police spokeswoman Cpl. Angie Willhite confirms that all 15 of the department's volunteer chaplains are Christian. The letter also asked the department to end its chaplain program. Bradford says Shreveport doesn't plan on doing that.

## Beijing Officials Harass House Churches (7)

Chinese officials in Beijing have reportedly been pressuring landlords to cancel their leases to house churches. The national security brigade of the Xicheng District Public Security Bureau visited a church and investigated the proceedings. Two days after the visit, the brigade reportedly asked the landlord of the building to cancel the lease of the church. The church asked to

remain anonymous, but a member related how the officials pressured the Christians to stop conducting services at the building.

An elder from another church said that the authorities have also been harassing Christians in his neighborhood.



Recently, Beijing officials have stepped up the crackdown on religion. In April, government officials reportedly forced the Zion Church to install surveillance cameras inside and outside of the church premises. Members were reportedly interrogated by officials regarding their housing situations, occupations, and details about their families as well as their relationship with the church.

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## significant news for christians

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

# THE Church Around the WORLD

February 2019



## Country in Focus: Nauru (1)

Nauru is a tiny island nation consisting of a coral atoll ringed with sandy beaches and a central plateau of phosphates from fossilized bird droppings. The island is located northeast of Papua New Guinea in the South Pacific Ocean. The population of just over 10,000 enjoys freedom of religion.

Nauru's once-booming economy has collapsed, since phosphate mining now produces only a fraction of its former output. Offshore banking on the Internet has also been shut down, having been revealed as a front for the money-laundering activities of Russian crime syndicates. It was a courageous move, forfeiting the flow of money into the country—an amount approaching tens of billions of dollars per year.

The economic meltdown has struck this nation hard, and it is a shadow of its former self. Almost all of its food must be imported, and freshwater supplies are insufficient. Half the population has diabetes and is overweight. Most are unemployed.

Prayer concerns:

- For God to reward Nauruans' prioritizing of righteousness over riches and for sustainable economic solutions to be found that will provide livelihoods for those making the island their home.
- For spiritual awareness to grow as the economy shrinks—the decline in materialism has already awakened the local churches, and evangelical numbers are growing.
- For the *JESUS* film, which has been seen by virtually the entire population of the island, to continue to have an impact on their lives.

Devote yourselves to prayer with an alert mind and a thankful heart.

COLOSSIANS 4:2

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## Nigerian Christians Killed in Muslim Attack (2)

Muslims attacked a market in Kaduna state in north-central Nigeria, killing dozens of Christians and burning a church building. Area residents said a Muslim at the market

began yelling "Thief!" in the late afternoon, a move calculated to cause pandemonium ahead of an attack on Christians and their homes and businesses.

"A Muslim raised a false alarm about a thief in the market, which caused stampede, and then other Muslims started chanting

Continued on page 2

'Allahu Akbar [the jihadist slogan, *God is greater*],' attacking Christians, burning houses and shops belonging to Christians in the town," reported an eyewitness to the event.

Rev. James Moore of the town's Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) said that the assailants burned down one church building belonging to the Cherubim and Seraphim movement.

Christians make up 51.3 percent of Nigeria's population, while Muslims living primarily in the north and middle belt account for 45 percent. Nigeria is ranked 14th on Open Doors' 2018 World Watch

List of countries where Christians suffer the most persecution.

### Attacks on Christians Surge in Sri Lanka (3)

Attacks and other actions against Christians in Sri Lanka have escalated recently, with Hindu extremism beginning to take root alongside longtime Buddhist aggression, according to human rights advocates. Sri Lanka's population is about 70 percent Buddhist and 13 percent Hindu.

"Last month there have been more incidents that have been documented than previous months," an attorney with the



Church Around the WORLD



### This month you can . . . See Everything as Outreach

Five years ago, my church developed a strategy for how we would engage in outreach and evangelism in our neighborhood and community. What we concluded was that everything we do is about reaching out to our community in the hopes of making a connection with them. This means being intentional about providing a welcoming and comfortable atmosphere for members and visitors to feel at home within the church and out in the community. This perspective changed the way we worshiped, how we gathered, and how we planned programs and activities. It even changed the way we made coffee. No one wants to drink bad, watered-down coffee.

The simplest changes can have the greatest impact on how much those in the community feel welcomed in your church. If you recite prayers or creeds in your service, consider printing the words in the bulletin and reading them rather than reciting them from memory so that those who don't know them won't feel excluded. If your coffee and fellowship hour is located in a room far off, consider relocating to a more accessible and inviting area. We used to hold our coffee and fellowship hour in a room located in the back of the sanctuary. We realized that for newcomers the location could be intimidating and therefore not many stayed after worship to mingle. We

moved it near the entrance of the church so that as people walked out, they could easily grab something to eat and meet someone new.

When my church developed a strategy plan for how we were to live out the vision of the church, the strategy wasn't about what we were going to do, but how we were going to go about doing things. I can sum up the strategy in three words: welcome, nurture, and commit. Everything we do must first be from the perspective of hospitality, then how we nurture spiritual growth, and then our willingness to commit.

*(This content is excerpted from an article by Theresa Cho on the Sojourners' website.)*

National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka stated.

Over a period of nine months last year, 67 incidents were reported against Christians in Sri Lanka. The highest number of incidents fell under the categories of "violence" and "threats."

"We are witnessing that communities are being mobilized in an increasing manner against Christians," the attorney said. "We are seeing that the extremist elements are able to influence communities as a whole and lead violent mob attacks against places of worship and people."

Sri Lanka is ranked 44th on Christian support organization Open Doors' 2018 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to be a Christian.

### Norwegian Doctor Won't Insert IUDs, Fired (4)

After a doctor was fired for refusing to perform a procedure that contradicted her faith, Norway's supreme court ruled that a physician has the right to refuse to conduct procedures that violate their conscience.

Dr. Katarzyna Jachimowicz was fired after she refused to insert IUDs (intrauterine devices) into her patients. Jachimowicz made it clear that IUDs, which can act as abortifacients, are a violation of her Roman Catholic faith. The clinic was aware of the physician's

pro-life stance before she was hired in 2010. Her termination marked her as the first medical professional in Norway to be fired for exercising her right to freedom of conscience.

The Norwegian supreme court recently ruled in Jachimowicz's favor. The ruling protects one of the most fundamental rights, the right to act in accordance with one's deeply held beliefs.

### Sudan Releases Bible Shipments (5)

In a surprise move, Sudan has released shipments of Bibles long held in port, including one detained nearly six years ago.

The Rev. Ismail Abdurahman Kenani, Khartoum-based director of the Bible Society in Sudan, said port authorities had been delaying several shipments of Bibles in Port Sudan, on the Red Sea. Besides the shipment detained after Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir began a crackdown on Christian institutions in 2012, another one detained a little over three years ago was among those released in early August, Kenani said.

Kenani also stated that the estimated two million Christians in Sudan have endured a critical shortage of Arabic-language Bibles. Sudan has been designated a Country of Particular Concern by the US State Department since 1999.