

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER

INFORMATION FOR LEADING PRAYERS

OUTLINE FOR 5 – 7 MINUTES

PREPARATION Download video or PowerPoint (whichever you plan to use) from www.churchinchains.ie and familiarise yourself with it. Both video and PowerPoint have captions. While the PowerPoint is self-explanatory and may be shown without spoken commentary, a suggested commentary is printed overleaf, which you may like to use. Read the bookmark with prayer points. Even if not using video or PowerPoint, it would be helpful in your preparations to view one of them.

SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER Distribute bookmarks to people as they arrive or place on seats/pews.

INTRODUCTION Introduce the subject ("Today is the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church and churches across Ireland, Britain and other countries will be taking time during their worship services to pray for the Persecuted Church"). Explain that today's prayers will focus on Eritrea, which is one of the most repressive countries in the world and where hundreds of Christians are in prison.

PRESENTATION Run the video or PowerPoint (each is **approximately 4 minutes long**)

PRAYER Pray using the three prayer points on the bookmark and encourage people to take their bookmarks home and continue praying for Eritrea. Alternatively, you may wish to use the printed prayer overleaf.

OUTLINE FOR MORE THAN 5 MINUTES

PREPARATION – as above but also read through suggested Bible Reading (**Psalm 10**).

SUNDAY 17 NOVEMBER Distribute bookmarks to people as they arrive or place on seats/pews.

INTRODUCTION – as above

BIBLE READING: Psalm 10 The following notes are for those with time to explain the relevance of the Psalm to Eritrea today. In this Psalm, David is in deep trouble – the wicked have the upper hand and there is a terrible sinking feeling of helplessness. David cries out to God in a deep wail that is almost shocking to us. If we think God and Jesus are far removed from our problems, is not the cry of David reminiscent of the cry of Jesus from the cross? ("My God, My God, Why have You forsaken me?") Christians in Eritrea have suffered injustice and repression for many years and many may echo the cry of David, "Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God. Do not forget the helpless." (v 12)

David finds rest in two truths: 1. God sees what is going on: "*But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand.*" (v14) 2. God is King for ever: "*The LORD is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land.*" (v16) Remembering these truths strengthens his faith and despite the seeming lack of change in his suffering and circumstances, he can confidently say: "*You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry*" (v17).

PRESENTATION and PRAYER If using video, pause at the last slide which shows the three prayer points. You may wish to invite at least one other person to participate in prayer.

If using PowerPoint pause as follows:

PAUSE at 5 (President Afewerki) – Pray using **Prayer Point 1** on the bookmark.

PAUSE at 8 (Six prisoners) – Pray using **Prayer Point 2** on the bookmark.

PAUSE at 10 (Refugees) – Pray using **Prayer Point 3** on the bookmark.

Encourage people to take their bookmarks home and continue praying for Eritrea.

POWERPOINT COMMENTARY

NUMBER	DESCRIPTION	SUGGESTED COMMENTARY
1	Today is IDOP	Today, we're joining with churches all across Ireland and other countries in giving time in worship services to pray for persecuted Christians.
2	World map	Christians face varying degrees of persecution in 60 countries, ranging from Severe (Red) through Significant (Orange) to Limited (Green).
3	Eritrea map	Eritrea is coloured red on this map because Christians there face severe persecution.
4	Faith Church of Christ	All churches apart from Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran have been closed since 2002.
5	President Isaias Afewerki	President Afewerki led Eritrea to independence from Ethiopia in 1991 and has been in power ever since.
6	Twen Theodros	Twen has been in several prisons and has suffered beatings and torture. She is known for showing great love and care to her fellow-prisoners.
7	Patriarch Antonios	Patriarch Antonios (now 92) was deposed by the Eritrean government after he asked for the release of three Orthodox priests.
8	Six prisoners	These six long-term Christian prisoners are representative of hundreds of Christians who are currently held without trial or sentence.
9	Soldiers on parade	Military service is compulsory in Eritrea and begins in the final year of secondary school. It continues indefinitely and critics describe it as slavery.
10	Refugees	Over 500,000 Eritreans have fled the country and become refugees. Many live in neighbouring Ethiopia and Sudan.
11	Young boys	Eritrean Christians pray earnestly for an end to the oppression of the people and for God to intervene and bring healing to the nation.
12	Eritrea in next magazine	The next issue of <i>Church in Chains</i> magazine will include much more information for prayer from Eritrea.

A PRAYER FOR ERITREA

Lord of the nations,

We bring before You today the nation of Eritrea, known as one of the most repressive countries in the world and whose government has been accused by the UN of carrying out "crimes against humanity". We pray for President Isaias Afewerki who has led the country since 1991 and is responsible for the persecution of political opponents, journalists and thousands of Christians. We ask that President Afewerki would change his ways and instead rule with righteousness and justice.

We pray for the hundreds of Christians imprisoned without trial or sentence and held in harsh conditions in labour camps without knowing when, if ever, they will be released. We ask that You give every Christian prisoner courage, strength and hope.

We pray for all the people of Eritrea and particularly those who struggle in open-ended military service, frequently for low pay and often with very few opportunities to see their families. We also remember those who have fled the country and are living in refugee camps hoping for a better future. We ask You, Lord, to intervene and bring healing to the whole nation.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.



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