

# INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

## SUNDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2020

### INFORMATION FOR LEADING PRAYERS

*Thank you for taking part in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church – you and your church will be joining many churches in Ireland, Britain and other countries in devoting time to praying for the persecuted. This information sheet offers suggestions as to how your prayers for our brothers and sisters in Nigeria can be incorporated into your time of worship (whether that be recorded or live). Please discuss with your church leader and choose what would work best in your church situation.*

### RECORDED or LIVESTREAMED SERVICE

**PREPARATION** View video at [www.churchinchains.ie](http://www.churchinchains.ie) and familiarise yourself with it. The video features Mark Lipdo of the Stefanos Foundation (a Church in Chains partner organisation serving persecuted Nigerian Christians) and ends with three prayer points for Nigeria. These are also included on a bookmark which will be enclosed with the forthcoming Winter issue of *Church in Chains* magazine. Even if you don't plan to use the video, it would be helpful in your preparations to view it.

**PRESENTATION** The estimated time involved (introduction + video + prayer) is around 5 minutes. Introduce the subject briefly ("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 this year the prayers will focus on Nigeria's Middle Belt region, where hundreds of Christians have been killed this year. Our Winter magazine will include more information.

Show the video (**approximately 3 minutes long**). If not using video, give a basic introduction to the situation in Nigeria's Middle Belt – the following paragraph may be a helpful summary.

Christians living in the Middle Belt and north east of Nigeria have faced a huge upsurge in violence since the beginning of 2020 with over 1,200 Christians estimated to have been killed. Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa Province and Fulani militants have each engaged in numerous attacks on Christian villages and there has been no effective government response to stop what is increasingly being described as "genocide".

**PRAYER** Pray using the following three prayer points (shared by our Nigeria partner Mark Lipdo). Alternatively, you may wish to use the printed prayer overleaf.

#### **1. Pray for Nigerian Christian leaders to be united.**

*It is vital that all churches come together in the face of such a determined effort to eliminate Christianity from the Middle Belt region. Many church leaders in the south of the country are not aware of the extent of the suffering of Christians in the Middle Belt.*

#### **2. Pray for protection for Nigerian Christians and that God will provide for them.**

*Christians in the Middle Belt region feel helpless in the face of these ongoing attacks from such a powerful enemy and with a lack of support from security forces. For many who have had to flee for their lives, they live an uncertain life in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps.*

#### **3. Pray that God will raise up righteous political leaders.**

*The lack of an effective government response to the ongoing attacks has led to a great sense of hopelessness throughout the Middle Belt region and a great desire that leaders who will not rule justly will be replaced by leaders who will.*

Finish by encouraging people to find out more by visiting our website [www.churchinchains.ie](http://www.churchinchains.ie) or obtaining a copy of our latest magazine and asking them to continue praying for Nigeria.

## EXTRA SUGGESTIONS FOR CHURCHES USING ZOOM

Introduce the topic, then show the video of Mark Lipdo speaking (by sharing screen) followed by prayer for Nigeria (using the guidelines overleaf or the printed prayer below).

If your church encourages individuals to participate in prayer, the three prayer points could be covered by different people. Alternatively, if your church uses breakout rooms on Zoom, you could use these so that more people could participate in prayer. The estimated time involved (introduction + video + prayer) would be from 5 – 10 minutes depending on length of prayers.

## SUGGESTED BIBLE READING/BIBLE STUDY

If your church would like to devote more time or to centre its service around the persecuted church, here is a suggested Bible reading.

**BIBLE READING: Psalm 28** *(The following notes explain briefly the relevance of the Psalm to Nigeria today.)*

From the days of the Early Church, Christians have turned to the Psalms for comfort in times of distress. In the 4th century, church leader Athanasius, wrote a famous letter outlining the usefulness of the Psalms in every situation. He himself experienced persecution, being cast into exile on five occasions, totalling 17 years. Writing to others facing persecution, he advised "Pay no attention either to the weakness of your own humanity or to the brazenness of their attack, but cry unceasingly on God, using Psalm 28." Such is the situation of Christians in Nigeria's Middle Belt today.

Verses 1 and 2 describe God as a Rock and are an urgent plea to God to listen to David's cry.

Verses 3 and 4 describe the deceit of his attackers, who are neighbours, and calls for God to "repay them for their deeds and their evil work".

Verse 5 expresses confidence that God will act in judgment against his enemies.

Verses 6 to 9 praise God for hearing and acting and describe God as "my strength and my shield". They conclude with a prayer for God's people: "be their shepherd and carry them forever".

## A PRAYER FOR NIGERIA

O Lord our Rock,

We come to you today to intercede for our brothers and sisters living in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria who have suffered so much this year at the hands of wicked men who have attacked them without mercy.

We pray for all Christians living in this region and especially for Christian leaders, that they may stand firm and united in the face of such a determined effort to eliminate Christianity.

We ask for an end to these attacks and that You will protect your people from their enemies. We also pray that You will provide for all the needs of your people – especially those who have had to flee from their homes and lands and go and live in IDP camps. We also pray for the Stefanos Foundation that You will strengthen its arm as it reaches out with mercy and compassion to help those in great need.

We are sad to hear of the indifference and inaction of state and national leaders to the ongoing suffering of Christians in the Middle Belt and so we pray, O Lord that You will raise up righteous political leaders to govern the country with fairness and justice and who will care for all its people.

In the Name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.



**CHURCH IN CHAINS**

PO Box 10447, Glenageary, Co. Dublin, Ireland

T 01-282 5393 E [info@churchinchains.ie](mailto:info@churchinchains.ie) W [www.churchinchains.ie](http://www.churchinchains.ie) Registered Charity: CHY15443