

significant news for christians

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

THE Church Around the WORLD

June 2020



Country in Focus: Honduras (1)

The Central American country of Honduras is a mountainous land with rainforests and fertile coastal plains on the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. The country is one of the Western hemisphere's poorest nations, with most of the wealth in the hands of a very small minority. Widespread unemployment, low wages, and limited development make life difficult for the majority, with most of the population living below the poverty line. The democratic civilian government has been hampered by the power and autonomy of the military. Stamping out government corruption, tackling crime, and creating jobs will be challenges for any elected leader for years to come. However, many of the indigenous people groups of the eastern rainforests have won significant concessions to protect their lands and culture.

While there has been steady growth in the segment of the population that identifies as evangelical—currently nearly 25 percent—denominational conflicts, jealousy between leaders, and isolationism between churches are still widespread. Church leadership training is vital but remains costly.

Prayer concerns:

- Pray for the stability of the government as it addresses socio-economic problems.
- Pray for new leaders to be trained.
- Pray for the success and growth of mission agencies.
- Pray for the ongoing outreach of the more than 40 local evangelical radio stations.
- Pray for a new spirit of interchurch cooperation.

Florida Court Rejects Atheist Suit (2)

A historic 34-foot World War II-era cross can remain standing in a Pensacola, FL, park, thanks to a federal appeals court ruling that pointed to a recent US Supreme Court decision. That Supreme Court decision in

American Legion v. American Humanist Association was considered a major victory for supporters of religious-themed monuments, and it had a major impact on the Pensacola case.

The American Humanist Association and the Freedom from Religion Foundation, two atheist

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organizations, sued to have the Pensacola cross removed, but their suit was denied.

“Having reconsidered the case in light of American Legion, we conclude, as the Supreme Court did there, that ‘the Cross does not offend the Constitution,’” Judge Kevin Newsom wrote for the court. “The cross’s presence on city property does not violate the Establishment Clause.”

A cross has stood at the same location for 79 years.

Chinese Churches “Must Support” Communist Leaders (3)

New regulations that went into effect in China recently require churches and other



This month you can . . . Send Your Child Off to College

As parents, letting go is something we do a lot of over the years, and it is scriptural. God tells us to train our children up in the right way and then let them go out and live their own lives (see Proverbs 22:6). Our end goal is to prepare our kids to navigate the world on their own.

Here are a few hints to help parents survive as they wave goodbye to their college-bound children.

- 1. Breathe.** Take a moment. Inhale and exhale. Saying goodbye is a life-changing moment, but the world isn’t ending, even though your heart might be telling you otherwise. College doesn’t mark the end of your relationship; it signals the beginning of something new and exciting for both of you.
- 2. Accept what you can’t control.** It’s been your job to create a safe, loving environment for your kids. Sending them out in the world can be terri-

fy. But don’t dwell on the what-ifs. You’ve modeled positive behaviors for your kids and taught them about redemption. Once your child leaves, there will be tons of situations you can’t control. And that’s okay.

- 3. Concentrate on what you did right.** Over the years, you have done more right than wrong. Make a list of your strengths and trust that your words and actions have made a positive impact.
- 4. Open lines of communication.** If you’ve never felt comfortable being open and honest with your child, now’s the time to start. Talk about your own experience leaving home. Share mistakes and consequences as well as exciting events. If you get real with them, they’ll feel safe enough to get real with you.
- 5. Have a plan.** There are a lot of places to get lost in

college—a lot of new opportunities, some good, some bad. Brainstorm possible scenarios, and ask your child how they will handle them. Put a plan in place before the theoretical becomes reality.

- 6. Be a safe place.** We all need shelter from the storms of life, somewhere to turn in a moment of crisis. Regardless of the miles between you and your child, you’re a phone call away. Your child may have to live with their actions, but they don’t have to live with them alone.
- 7. Make a prayer list.** In the end, it’s God who watches over our kids and God who changes their hearts. Knowing that how our kids’ lives turn out isn’t all up to us is the most solid comfort we can find. So when you feel like you can’t do anything, make a prayer list. And then pray.



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religious organizations to “support the leadership” of the Communist Party and “adhere to” the government’s teachings. Further, all churches and religious organizations must be “examined and approved” before they can legally worship.

The new regulations, dubbed the “Administrative Measures for Religious Groups,” were passed in 2019. The law states that a religious organization can be recognized as such only when it has been examined and approved by the religious affairs department of the people’s government. The law also says churches and other religious organizations “must support the leadership of the Communist Party of China” and “adhere to the direction of Sinicization of religions in China.”

“Sinicization” is a term that means all religions must reflect Chinese culture and traditions, as defined by the government. The new regulations emphasize that the purpose of churches and other religious organizations is to support the government—and not necessarily to worship God. The law also states that religious organizations “should publicize the guidelines and policies of the Communist Party of China” to the clergy and religious citizens “in order to instruct and direct the clergy and religious citizens to support the rule of the Communist Party of China and support the socialist system, follow the path of socialism with

Chinese characteristics, abide by the laws, regulations, rules and policies, correctly treat the relationship between state laws and religious rules, and strengthen their national consciousness, consciousness of rule by law, and consciousness of one’s duty as a citizen.”

UNC Survey Suggests Conservative Students Are More Tolerant ⁽⁴⁾

A survey of more than 1,000 undergraduate students at the University of North Carolina suggested that conservative students are more tolerant toward other viewpoints than are liberal students. The study found that 19 percent of liberal students but only 3 percent of conservative students believe it is appropriate to “create an obstruction” so that a campus speaker who holds “objectionable” political views cannot address the audience. Similarly, 19 percent of liberal students and only 1 percent of conservative students say it’s okay to “form a picket line to block students” from entering an event with a speaker who has objectionable views. The liberal students were asked to consider “objectionable” content a speaker might address, such as “same-sex marriages should not be recognized as valid in the United States” and “the United States should build a

wall on its southern border to decrease undocumented/illegal immigration.”

Meanwhile, 23 percent of liberal students and 3 percent of conservative students say they are not willing to be friends with someone from the opposite ideology (a conservative friend for a liberal student, and vice versa).

China Raids Churches for Bibles (5)

Government officials within China have confiscated Bibles from churches in recent months and threatened fines as part of an intensified crackdown on Christianity.

The campaign has targeted illegal underground churches as well as legal Three-Self churches, which are registered with the government.

“If our Bibles are taken away, we have no more,” a pastor of a Three-Self church said. “We are thinking of asking our congregation members to hide them in the mountains.”

Last winter, government officials raided a different Three-Self church in search of “pirated Bibles” either not printed in the country or printed at illegal printers. The pastor told them the church owned only legal Bibles printed within the country, but the officials nevertheless seized 30 Bibles.

According to the persecution watchdog, similar raids have taken place “all over the country.”

In some locations, church members have stopped bringing their Bibles to church out of concern they will be taken. Such is the case at a Three-Self Seventh-day Adventist

Church, where over 100 “pirated” Bibles were taken during a December raid.

Pastor Killed in Burkina Faso (6)

A pastor and at least 23 others were killed when terrorists attacked a Protestant church in northeast Burkina Faso. The gunmen injured 18 others in the attack. In a neighboring community, a deacon, a pastor, and the pastor’s family were also killed.

The local mayor said that about 20 gunmen had attacked the church. Additionally, the gunmen were said to have kidnapped three minors and forced them to help transport oil and rice raided from the town shops.

In 2019, Islamic extremists killed over 4,000 in Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali. The geographic focus of terrorist attacks has shifted eastward from Mali to Burkina Faso and is increasingly threatening West African coastal states.

According to the UN, the number of people displaced in Burkina Faso rose 1,200 percent in 2019. There are about 600,000 internally displaced people in the country as it is becoming one of the world’s fastest-growing humanitarian crises.

“Burkina Faso is losing the religious tolerance it has otherwise practiced throughout its earlier history,” an Open Doors report on persecution in Burkina Faso reads. “A radicalization of the Islamic population is now taking place. The recent expansion of Islamic militancy in the Sahel region threatens the developing democracy.”

My dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58