

2021 'TIL ALL HEAR PRAYER INITIATIVE

Reaching the World's Unreached Peoples through Prayer

Official Guide





NOT EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN GO TO “ALL NATIONS” OF THE WORLD

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of **all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” – Matthew 28:18–20*

More than 3 billion people worldwide don’t have access to local churches, pastors, and Bibles in their native languages. They represent **more than 7,000 people groups (“nations”)**, with their own languages, cultures, and traditions.

They need to hear the good news!

Not every Christian can travel to the world’s remotest places and share the gospel with the unreached.

BUT EVERY CHRISTIAN CAN PRAY

Welcome to the 2021 ’Til All Hear Prayer Initiative: the simplest way to make a difference for the kingdom this spring!

Join believers from around the world as we pray together to reach those who have never heard the gospel.

1. Pray independently using this Prayer Guide

- background information about each region of the world
- details about specific unreached people groups
- ways to pray strategically for people in each region

2. Pray with the global church during the 10 days leading up to Pentecost (on May 23)

3. Access additional resources and register for 3 free online events at advancingnativemissions.com/pray

You will help unreached peoples hear the gospel for the first time through your prayers!

Pledge to pray at advancingnativemissions.com/pray.



LATIN AMERICA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 1,460

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 103

Latin America stretches from Mexico to the southern tip of Chile in South America. Most of the region has been predominantly Roman Catholic for centuries. Many people today practice religious syncretism, mixing Christianity, animism, and the occult. Evangelical Protestant Christianity is growing rapidly.



Challenges include rising secularism and consumerism, political unrest and extreme inflation, and widespread poverty. One of the fastest-growing religions in the region is Islam. Many academic communities now have well-funded Islamic “education centers” promoting Islam as a religion of peace and advancement. Muslim activists often emphasize the Moorish influence in traditional Spanish culture with the goal of making Latin Americans respond favorably to Islam.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

HUICHOL PEOPLE OF WESTERN MEXICO

- 51,000 people
- 0.4% evangelical Christian
- have access to New Testament and “Jesus Film”
- live in communities of extended families called “ranchos”
- maintain many ancient cultural traditions
- subsistence farmers dependent on maize, beans, chilies, and squash
- typically Roman Catholic with animistic influence
- shamans ritually capture the spirits of deceased Huichol people in crystals, stored in community shrines called *xiriki*

PRAYING FOR LATIN AMERICA

- Pray for freedom from spiritual bondage, whether traditional beliefs, the occult, or secularism.
- Pray for provision for underfunded pastors, church planters, and missionaries.
- Pray for protection for Christian workers facing threats from drug traffickers, oppressive governments, hostile tribes, or religious persecutors.
- Pray for wise leaders who govern with integrity in the midst of economic collapse and corruption.
- Pray for the hearts of the millions of unreached people in this region to be open to the gospel.

NORTHERN AMERICA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 602

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 132

Northern America includes the United States, Canada, and Greenland (a self-governing part of Denmark). Protestant Christianity predominates, but with significant populations of Catholics, Jews, and Muslims. The region's unreached people groups represent about 6.8 million people, including 650,000 Jews, more than 1 million Arabs, and about 840,000 Japanese. In general, the church is strongly influenced by the culture.



Challenges to the spread of the gospel include secularism, humanism, and materialism. There is also growing interest in Eastern religions, occultism, and paganism. Many espouse a generic "spirituality" but reject traditional Christianity. The belief that all religions are basically the same is prevalent and popular. Outright persecution is not common, but Christians do face increasing pressure.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

U.S. IRAQI ARABS

- 126,000 people
- 0.2% evangelical Christian
- many fled to the U.S. because of wars in the Middle East
- live mostly in metropolitan areas, particularly Detroit and Chicago
- majority middle-class
- most are Shiites, but others follow various Islamic sects

PRAYING FOR NORTH AMERICA

- Pray for revival in American churches so they can reach unreached people groups in their own communities.
- Pray for more evangelists, church planters, and committed believers to reach the unreached of this region.
- Pray for supernatural revelations through visions, dreams, miracles, and demonstrations of God's power.
- Pray for the exposure of false and misleading influences (secularism, humanism, non-Christian religions, and cults) and for the true gospel to be proclaimed.
- Pray for the hearts of the millions of unreached people in this region to be open to the gospel.

EUROPE & RUSSIA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 1,460

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 561

Many think of Europe as Christian, yet evangelicals are only a small minority. In Western Europe most people are secularized, while in Eastern Europe people often identify themselves with a religious label simply because of their ethnicity. Some unreached people groups number in the millions across the region, including Albanians, Turks, and Bosniaks.



Challenges to the spread of the gospel include religious traditions, secular humanistic thinking, and ethnic divisions. Still, in some countries, such as France, Ireland, and Russia, the number of evangelical Christians is increasing significantly.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

THE TATARS OF RUSSIA

- 5.4 million people
- 0.49% evangelical Christian
- branch of Turkic peoples who live throughout Russia, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe
- many speak Russian in addition to a distinctive language called Kazan Tatar
- the Bible is still being translated into Kazan Tatar
- tribal people who traditionally lived in rural villages but have migrated to cities in recent decades
- majority Muslim with some remaining influence of ancient shamanistic practice manifesting itself in superstitions such as a common belief in the “evil eye”
- tend to be suspicious of Christianity because of historical oppression and forced conversions by the Russian Orthodox Church

PRAY TO REACH EUROPE AND RUSSIA

- Pray for people to be set free from secularism, religious tradition, and false belief systems.
- Pray for more workers for this sparsely staffed mission field.
- Pray for provision for Christian workers where local support is low.
- Pray for growing and successful church planting efforts, as well as meeting places for new churches.
- Pray for the hearts of the millions of unreached people in this region to be open to the gospel.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 3,500+

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 854

Sub-Saharan Africa stretches south from the Arab-influenced countries of North Africa (see “Middle East & North Africa”). The church is growing rapidly in many countries. However, some of the region’s largest ethnic groups remain unreached, such as the Fulani of Nigeria (16 million), the Somali (11 million), and the Oromo of Ethiopia (7 million).



Challenges to the spread of the gospel include widespread religious syncretism (mixing of religious practices and beliefs), entrenched traditional religions, severe persecution in some localities, the growing influence of the prosperity gospel, and the continued expansion of Islam.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

THE HAUSA

- 49+ million
- 1% evangelical Christian
- largest ethnic group in West Africa
- inhabit an area once known as Hausaland, which was divided by Britain and France into Niger (French colony) and Nigeria (British colony)
- traditionally agriculturalists, with a long history in trade as well
- primarily Muslim, with strong ties between Islam and cultural identity
- some mixing of Islam and traditional animistic beliefs
- known for hospitality and friendliness to strangers

PRAYING FOR AFRICA

- Pray for the gospel to break down the walls of tribalism that divide the church in Africa.
- Pray for Christian believers to remain faithful in spite of severe persecution.
- Pray for sufficient Bibles in local languages, and for access to education so the present and future generations can read them.
- Pray for a well-grounded biblical worldview, especially where syncretism, animism, tribal religions, and the prosperity gospel hold sway.
- Pray that African Christianity will become more missional in its church-planting methods, accepting the call of Christ to pioneer into new areas with the gospel.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 585

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 396

This region is the historic homeland of Christianity, and some indigenous churches trace their history back to the first century. For many adherents of these ancient churches, though, being “Christian” is largely an ethnic or cultural identity rather than a personal relationship with Jesus.



Islam originated in Arabia in the seventh century and spread quickly. Islam now dominates the region, and the majority of the 264 million unreached people in this region are Arab Muslims. Large populations of Jews, Berbers, Persians (Iranians), and Kurds also live in this region. Many Muslims are now coming to faith in Christ. Newer churches, especially those composed of believers from Muslim backgrounds, are vibrant and active.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

ISRAELI JEWS

- 6.8 million people
- 0.045% evangelical Christian
- mostly adherents of some form of Judaism, with a strong Orthodox influence
- followers of Jesus known as Messianic Jews sometimes face restrictions and hostility
- highly literate
- most live in urban areas
- live among a great diversity of languages and cultures because of immigration to Israel
- speak Hebrew, a unifying ethnic and cultural influence
- strong secularism

PRAYING FOR MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

- Pray for hearts to be open to the gospel, especially among Muslims, Jews, and nominal Christians.
- Pray for boldness among native Christians as they share the gospel.
- Pray for Christians from Muslim backgrounds who face pressure from family members and communities.
- Pray for God to continue to send dreams and visions to people in this region, as has been happening for decades.
- Pray for governments to ease restrictions on Christians and churches.
- Pray for the many Christians enduring persecution, especially those from Muslim backgrounds who need safe housing and other aid.

CENTRAL ASIA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 549

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 381

Central Asia includes the “-stans” (“stan” means “place of”) as well as Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Christianity once flourished here. Armenia was the first country to officially declare itself Christian. Eastern Orthodox and other ancient churches are still present, as are some indigenous evangelical churches. The region is predominantly Muslim. The small minority of evangelical Christians face some opposition from Eastern Orthodox institutions, Islamist groups, and governments. The largest unreached people groups in the region — including Turks, Persians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Azerbaijanis — represent tens of millions of people and are mostly Muslim.



UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

THE AZERIS (AZERBAIJANIS)

- 9.9 million people
- 0.2% evangelical Christian
- have lived in the region of the Caucasus Mountains west of the Caspian Sea since ancient times
- adopted Islam after its introduction in the 7th century
- land was part of the Soviet Union for most of the 20th century
- maintain strong religious ties to Iran
- historically identified themselves as Muslims first, then Azeri or Azerbaijani
- Turkic people ethnically and linguistically
- suffered widespread economic hardship after the collapse of the Soviet Union

PRAYING FOR CENTRAL ASIA

- Pray that God will reveal Himself through dreams, visions, and miracles.
- Pray for indigenous churches to grow, and for God to raise up native pastors and church planters.
- Pray for encouragement, boldness, and faithfulness for believers facing persecution.
- Pray for revival among ancient, traditional churches in this region.

SOUTH ASIA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 4,100

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 3,682

South Asia includes Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. It is a very diverse region, with many languages, religious beliefs, political systems, and cultural practices. The majority of people practice Hinduism, Islam, or Buddhism. South Asia contains about 45 percent of Asia's population and more than 25 percent of the world's population. India alone has a population of 1.37 billion people, with 2,700 unreached people groups. Ninety-five percent of the world's least evangelized people groups live in South Asia. Christians face challenges from Islamic societies in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Maldives, and increasing restrictions in India, Nepal, and Bhutan.



UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

THE SAYYID

- 17+ million people
- 0.0% evangelical Christian
- one of the largest Muslim groups in all of South Asia
- mostly live in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Nepal
- claim to be direct descendants of Muhammad through his daughter Fatima
- "Sayyid" means "master" or "lord"
- often part of higher social classes
- typically devout Muslim and often leaders in their Muslim communities
- conversion to Christianity has a strong effect on others because of Sayyids' standing in community

PRAYING FOR SOUTH ASIA

- Pray for effective Christian witness in the midst of the pervasive influence of Hinduism in India and Nepal, Buddhism in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, and Islam in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Maldives.
- Pray for workers, funding, and resources to help the church grow in South Asia.
- Pray for safety and provision for Christian workers and their families.
- Pray for comfort and aid for Christians who have endured many recent natural disasters.
- Pray for new opportunities for ministry work when natural disasters and political unrest make conventional methods less effective.

SOUTHEAST ASIA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 1,800

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 696

Christianity has shown phenomenal growth in Southeast Asia in recent decades. Buddhism is common in these countries, while Islam is predominant in Indonesia and Malaysia. Many people groups also practice ancestor worship and animism. Poverty is widespread.

Some of the region's largest ethnics groups are unreached, including the Burmese of Myanmar, the Vietnamese, and the Thai.



UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

THAI (CENTRAL THAI)

- 22 million people.
- 0.27% evangelical Christian
- dominant ethnic group in Thailand, located mostly in southern and central Thailand.

- follow Theravada Buddhism, which has a powerful influence over their entire culture and society ("To be Thai is to be Buddhist" is a common saying)
- typical Thai religion is actually a syncretic blend of Buddhism, animism, and elements of Hinduism
- family is foundational in Thai society: marriage is very important, both husbands and wives are expected to perform prescribed roles in the home and in society, large extended families are common
- important values include self-control, respect, and a non-confrontational attitude; public displays of anger or telling lies are a great shame
- have a strong sense of national identity, with a deep love for country, king, and culture
- changed the country's name from Siam to Thailand ("land of the free") in 1939 to acknowledge Thailand's freedom from colonial influence
- Thailand has been called a "graveyard for missions" because of the pervasive influence of Buddhism

PRAYING FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA

- Pray for continued unity within church planting movements.
- Pray for Christian workers to overcome discouragement resulting from poverty and persecution.
- Pray for economic opportunities and support for Christian workers in impoverished and isolated areas.
- Pray for unreached people to see God answer their prayers, which native workers say is a primary avenue of evangelism.
- Pray for creative ways for indigenous Christians to show care for people's needs in unreached communities, such as starting schools, digging wells for clean water, or distributing food to the poor.

EAST ASIA



PEOPLE GROUPS: 700+

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS: 525

East Asia includes China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Japan, and North and South Korea — 1.6 billion people total. Buddhism, Shintoism, shamanism, ancestor worship, Sunni Islam, and atheism are all widespread in East Asia. Despite this, Christianity has made a significant impact in some countries, such as China, Taiwan, and South Korea. There is a high degree of persecution against Christians, especially in China and North Korea.



The region's 525 unreached people groups represent more than 304 million people. The Japanese are the largest, with 123 million people. The highest concentration of unreached people is found in China, with 443 unreached people groups.

UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP FOCUS:

GA MONG

- 72,000 people
- 0.0% evangelical Christian
- live in six Chinese provinces
- historically grouped with other peoples, but now recognized for their distinctive language, customs, and festivals
- practice ancestor worship and shamanism
- every home has an altar honoring the family's ancestors, where bowls of food and drink are offered
- no Bible is available in their native language
- no Christian workers currently serve among them

PRAYING FOR EAST ASIA

- Pray for the translation and distribution of the Bible in the languages and dialects of unreached people groups, especially in communities without any Bibles.
- Pray for faithfulness and bold witness among Christians under persecution in China and North Korea.
- Pray for freedom from materialism in Japan.
- Pray for opportunities for effective ministry among unreached people groups.
- Pray for the hearts of the millions of unreached people in this region to be open to the gospel.



UNPACKING “UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS”

By Eric Vess

Throughout the New Testament, Scripture refers to people groups, or “nations” (Greek: *ethnos*), as the primary way of describing the diversity of human life which God created and for which Jesus Christ was crucified and resurrected.

One of the clearest pictures of this people group diversity is in the seventh chapter of Revelation:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

– Revelation 7:9–10

The Bible does not see people primarily as citizens of countries, but rather as members of “tribes and peoples and languages.”

Evangelization and discipleship among all peoples is therefore of utmost importance.

There are more than 17,000 people groups in the world today. The gospel has reached roughly 10,000 of these biblical “nations.” What exactly does that mean? Each of these people groups has an indigenous church capable of evangelizing its own culture. That leaves nearly 7,000 people groups without a vital, reproducing church. These are considered unreached people groups.

That does not necessarily mean that there are no believers or churches among these people groups. There could be small groups of worshiping believers, but without outside help they would not be able to reproduce the church within their own culture.

An organic term for this kind of reproduction is “church planting.” The gospel message is the seed; the people and their culture are the soil; and the church planter or evangelist is the sower of the gospel seed. Just as in farming, there must be good seed, soil that is prepared to receive that seed, and sowers dedicated to the task. A deficiency in any of these areas will result in a poor crop or in no crop at all.

Any farmer will tell you that preparing a new field for planting is hard work. The same is true when it comes to planting the seed of the gospel in an unreached people group. Their cultural soil will likely be difficult to till and resistant to the seed. The sowers may be few.

Often just a small patch of field can be planted at first, but with faithful perseverance the planting will expand. The gospel seed will permeate the people group’s culture, and the church will begin healthy reproduction. A people group is said to be “reached” when the indigenous church is healthy enough to reproduce within its own culture without substantial outside assistance. That’s our goal.

That’s what your prayers are helping to accomplish.



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