

# PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

## Arts in mission

**W**e are made in the image of a creative God and our creativity can bring him glory.

The arts are also an asset in mission work:

*The arts are personal* – they are heart-to-heart. Artistic expression and response prevent the Christian faith being reduced to formulas, programmes, or clichés.

*The arts are intimate.* Our complex selves respond not just to facts or emotion, but also to the sense of beauty or ugliness. The creative arts add extra dimensions to a person's encounter with God.

*The arts are daily food.* Humans hunger for stories and beauty just as they hunger for food or God. Christian arts can enlighten a dulled world, sustain Christians in trials, and spark hope in hopeless situations.

*The arts seed further creativity.* The best art stirs people to reflect and create fresh art. In this way Christian art reproduces itself and extends the interaction between the risen Christ and the human species.

*The arts bind communities together.* Collective sung worship, or aesthetically pleasing buildings or rituals, for example, can unite people in communal devotion to God. We know ourselves to be part of something greater than our own individual faith.

*The arts can find soft places in hard hearts.* Among the multiple reasons that Jesus told stories was, first, because everyone enjoys a story, and second, because a story can start someone on a journey towards God even when that person is not willing at that time to seek him.



*The arts are 'wasteful'!* Art is not usually economically justified. Rather, like when an expensive bottle of pure nard (grown only in the Himalayas) was poured on Jesus, the arts are an expression of unfettered love.

 Pray for the multiplying of Christian artistic endeavour throughout the world.

 Pray that Christian artists will stay rooted in Christ, in truth and in love.

## THE NATIONS

### KYRGYZSTAN

Small, independent-minded, mountainous Kyrgyzstan (population 6.1 million), home of breathtaking scenery, is the least-bad in Central Asia in terms of political freedoms. Two leaders have been overthrown by popular protest. In 2017, power passed from one president to another in a competitive election, a first for the region. Corruption, poverty, inequality and division (between the urban north and the rural south) remain as threats.

Most Kyrgyz are Sunni Muslims, though that has more to do with ethnic identity and pride than Islamic practice. Older shamanistic ideas have deeper roots and matter more; radical Muslims are attempting to change this. Kyrgyzstan's Christians used to be all non-Kyrgyz, such as Russians or Ukrainians. That picture is changing. An indigenous Kyrgyz Church of Muslim-background believers has grown up since independence in 1991, probably numbering in the tens of thousands. As elsewhere in Central Asia, these Christians are pressured by their own extended families and by a suspicious and heavy-handed state. Church growth has slowed. Yet leaders are emerging, not least among young Christian professionals.



### LAOS

Like its larger neighbour Vietnam, this South-East Asian nation of 7 million people is a one-party Communist state that continues to liberalize its economy.

Also like Vietnam, Laos (which has a Buddhist background) is enjoying rapid church growth. Its Christian community is around 3% of the population. Indigenous Lao lead almost all churches and evangelism efforts.

Laos persecutes its Christians, especially those in unregistered churches and those who have turned to Christ from a Buddhist background.

 Pray for the Christians in these two nations, who face resistance from their families and the government. May God give them wisdom to serve their communities well, to share their faith wisely, and to build and grow their churches in love.



*Praying for the World* is a free weekly prayer guide to inspire and inform the whole church to pray for the whole world. Visit [www.lausanne.org/pray](http://www.lausanne.org/pray) to start any week. Created through the partnership of Operation World and the Lausanne Movement.