

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

The world

If the world was a village of 100 people, 33 would claim to be Christians; 22 would be Muslims, 14 Hindus, 7 Buddhists, 12 would be non-religious, and 12 would be of other religions.

The proportion of the world that claims to be Christian has been much the same for a century or more. But many things have changed through that time:

1. The Church has spread more widely. There are now groups of believers in every country.
2. The Christian faith has grown much stronger in the Majority World. Millions of Christians have been born across Africa and Asia. Many cultural Catholics in Latin America have met Christ in Pentecostal, charismatic and other evangelical churches.
3. In its former heartlands, particularly in Europe, the Christian movement has declined.
4. Pentecostals and charismatics have changed the composition of the Church. Almost zero in 1900, they now make up more than a third of all Christians.
5. The Church has grown despite opposition and



Whatever this year brings, we can pray to King Jesus: 'Your Kingdom come!'

persecution in countries like China, India, Sudan, Vietnam, Iran, Algeria, Albania and Mongolia.

6. Some of the fiercest persecution has been followed by the largest church growth. The Cultural Revolution in China was a deadly attack on all religions. Fifty years later, around 100 million Chinese have joined the Church, the greatest turning

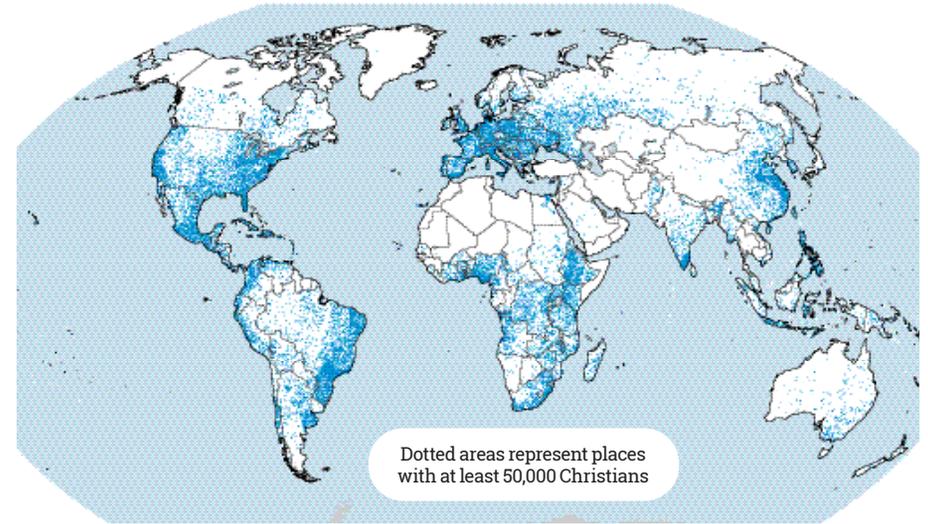
to the Christian faith in history (so far).

7. Thousands of people have turned to Christ in Muslim countries in the last 30 years. This has never happened before.



THE NATIONS

The mission heart of God



God's first word to Abraham at the dawn of recorded history was about blessing the nations (Genesis 12:3).

The story that follows, of the Jewish people in the Old Testament, is like the slow ripening of a seed-head, filled with God's purposes for the world.

After the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit on the Church, this seed-head has burst upon the nations. We are part of this, as we live the gospel out in the world.

This gospel comes to the nations like Christ came at first: in human weakness. The good news of Jesus spreads in the midst of our losses and struggles. The poor in spirit possess the Kingdom; the meek inherit the earth; those who hunger for justice are sustained in their fight. In our weakness, the power of Christ is made perfect.

As we start a new year, whatever we face, we can look up and see Jesus, reigning as King, unfolding his purpose to bring divine blessing to all peoples. In our small acts of service and devotion, we are walking alongside him in a cause and a life that can take all our love, and that cannot fail.

Let us pray that this year we will 'always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour in the Lord is not in vain' (see 1 Corinthians 15:58).

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 to start any week. Created through the partnership of Operation World and the Lausanne Movement.