



# Thy Kingdom Come

## Freedom of Religion or Belief

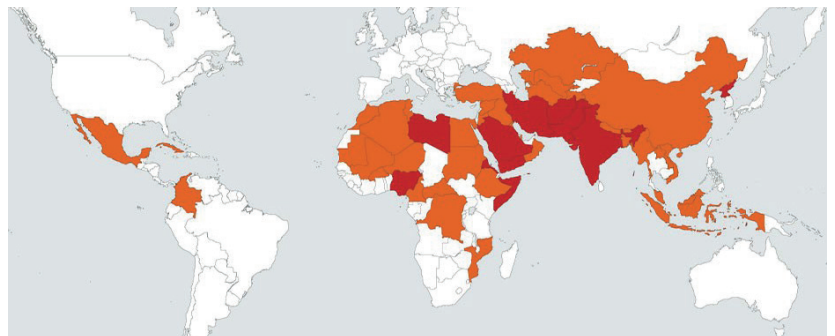
### What is Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB)?

FoRB is a basic human right, but 83% of the world's population are living in countries where their right to FoRB is threatened or banned.

### Who is persecuted?

The PM's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief, Fiona Bruce MP, says:

"Persecution is a huge, unrecognised problem across the world: people can't get an education; homes, churches are pulled down; people cannot get access to justice, they are put in prison. Open Doors UK each year produces the World Watch List and this lists the persecution of Christians across the world. Many other faiths, and humanists, who don't have a faith, are also persecuted in different



Open Doors UK's World Watch List published January 2022. Countries shown in red indicate severe persecution; orange countries, though less severe, are not good.

countries, but this year's World Watch List published in January 2022 says that around 360 million Christians across the world suffer persecution. A Christian is killed every two hours somewhere in the world."

### Personal stories

Fiona adds: "Many of you will have heard of the schoolgirls kidnapped in Nigeria and one of these groups of around 114 included one girl called Leah Sharibu. The girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram who work with Islamic terrorists. Eventually all the girls were released except Leah. The other girls reported that Leah wasn't released by them because she refused to renounce her Christian faith. She was 14 years old. As far as we know she is still there three years later.

"Another example is China. There are more than one million Uighurs in modern-day concentration camps simply because they are Uighurs, but in China, too, the Christian faith is coming under terrible oppression. A lawyer is in prison simply for defending in court Christian pastors who were told not to hold services in churches. Churches have had their crosses torn down, and the state often requires sermons to be vetted. There is a prohibition against children attending Christian church, cameras are being placed to check who is there. We need to bring to the world's attention how terrible this is in the 21st century."

### Pray – book a speaker – hold an event

This challenges us because there is so much persecution, but it challenges us to pray, and to respond. General Synod unanimously agreed on 10 February 2022 that churches pray for those persecuted. Fiona Bruce MP is arranging an International Ministerial Conference in London on 5-6 July 2022 to which 33 countries will send senior ministers, and has asked that churches (and schools) consider hosting events, prayer groups and fringe events in the run-up to the event. For more information see [bit.ly/EndThePersecution](https://bit.ly/EndThePersecution).

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## Pray

### Sunday intercessions and groups

Please use these prayers in the four weeks leading up to the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) on 5-6 July.

#### 12 June

*“See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”*

– Revelation 3:8

Father, we pray for those persecuted because they do not deny your name. Open our hearts so we can be a voice for the voiceless. May the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in London in July be an open door, taking action, for all faiths and none, to stop persecution. We pray for the Government and for the 33 countries attending, that wisdom, insight, and strength be given to them to influence those in power to bring freedom to all. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

#### 19 June

*“Do not be afraid! I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all people.”*

– Luke 2:10

Father, we pray for Freedom of Religion and Belief; for anyone who cannot freely believe as they would want. We pray that persecution ceases, that people can freely worship and reach their full potential in jobs and education; to live at home without fear of persecution. We pray as delegates attend the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in London in July. May decisions by global governments be made with compassion, understanding, and a desire to uphold human rights for all. Give us grace to continue to pray for the persecuted. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

#### 26 June

*“The Lord requires us to act justly, love goodness, and walk humbly with God.”*

– Micah 5:6

Father, fill us with your Spirit so that we may be a voice for the voiceless. Help us connect our hearts

to theirs so that we can encourage those attending the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) to use their influence to bring an end to the persecution of Christians and people of all faiths and none. May your grace and wisdom help us to encourage and raise awareness of Freedom of Religion or Belief for all. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

#### 3 July

*“There are those who hate the one who upholds justice in court and detest the one who tells the truth.”*

– Amos 5:10

Father, we lift up lawyers persecuted for defending pastors in court, who speak the truth yet get imprisoned themselves. With two days to go before the International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) in London, we pray that they can bring global protection both physically and culturally, through regulation and law. Help us to protect those without Freedom of Religion or Belief so that they can worship in joy, to live life knowing that God’s peace is a peace that passes all understanding. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

## Book a speaker

You may like to consider inviting a speaker to come to your church for a service, a prayer breakfast or tea; to a Mothers’ Union gathering; to a Deanery Synod or Churches Together meeting; or even an online gathering. Open Doors UK ([opendoorsuk.org/churches/speaker-request](https://opendoorsuk.org/churches/speaker-request)) and CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide; [csw.org.uk/inviteaspeaker](https://csw.org.uk/inviteaspeaker)) both offer speakers.

One church leader said that CSW’s visit to his church has challenged and encouraged his congregation. “Through their work, CSW could connect us with real people going through real hardship for their faith,” he said.

Open Doors UK, CSW, and Aid to the Church in Need ([acn.org](https://acn.org)) all give in-depth background information and resources if you would prefer to write your own talk. If you would like further guidance on this, please email the Revd Sue Thomas at [sue.thomas431@gmail.com](mailto:sue.thomas431@gmail.com)

You may like to encourage people to write to their

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MP, send a letter to someone persecuted for their faith or get involved in a current issue. Look out for these ideas on the charities' websites.

## Hold an event

Creative activities will attract a wide range of people. Here are some ideas to use alongside Question Cards (download a sheet of questions from [southwark.anglican.org/tkc](http://southwark.anglican.org/tkc)). Leaving cards on tables will start conversations to help people stand in the shoes of someone who has to hide their faith or belief.

## Wool-wrapped 'woody' cross

This is a symbol that can be disassembled should authorities come knocking on a door. Talk about Christians facing this possibility, how they cannot buy crosses but have to make their own. Mojtaba (say Mooshtaba) is a pastor who was imprisoned for his faith in Evin Prison in Iran. His story is moving, gentle, and profound. He said his home was searched and they took the 'woody' cross from him. He is now free in the UK.



I saw the doors, the huge gates of the prison

Listen to Mojtaba's story at: [vimeo.com/510796204](https://vimeo.com/510796204)

To make a 'woody' cross, gather two sticks the size that you want. Fasten the two pieces together with a small elastic band or piece of wool. At the centre, wind gold thread or wool around the arms of the cross, binding it over the horizontal bar and around the vertical bar a dozen times. Change to your chosen colour of wool. Working anticlockwise, bind the wool under and over each cross bar until it looks like the photograph (right). Finish off by binding the end of the wool under the back of the work.



## Scallop shell

A Christian symbol with a tag and prayer can lead to discussions about Christians using hidden symbols to leave for other Christians to find.



Take a scallop shell, obtainable online, or pick up shells on the beach. Attach a tag to it with a prayer such as the blessing, 'Deep peace of the running wave to you...' or write your own. You may prefer to write the prayer directly onto the shell in permanent marker, or paint it on, then protect it with a layer of clear varnish.

## Clay fish



A similar idea is the ancient Christian symbol of a fish. This can lead to discussions about Christians finding other Christians without the authorities discovering who they are. You may also like to read some personal stories from the Open Doors UK website: [opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news](http://opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news)

In order to make a clay fish, take some air-drying clay. Roll it out to about 2mm thickness and cut out the shape of a fish to whatever size you want. Mark a pattern on the fish and leave to dry as per the instructions on the clay. Once dry, paint and varnish to seal.



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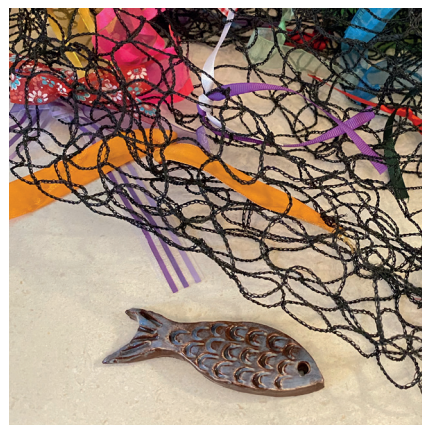
## Prayer passports

Introduce the children in your life to the persecuted church with Open Doors' Prayer Passport and map, a free resource which helps families to pray for their Christian family around the world.

Find free Travel the World Prayer Passports and Maps for children and young people here: [bit.ly/3LNyEsf](http://bit.ly/3LNyEsf)

## Prayer net

A Prayer Net can be used with a map of countries where Christians face persecution so that people can tie on a ribbon as they pray for a country. Open Doors UK has maps and short stories of people in these countries to help us connect on a heart level. See [opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list](http://opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list)



To make a prayer net, find a piece of netting – pond netting is ideal (available online or from a garden centre). Make available various colours of ribbon or wool to tie on the net as a prayer is said.

## Bead bracelet

Each bead on the bracelet represents part of the Lord's Prayer. When worship in church is not allowed, this is another way in which persecuted Christians can keep their prayer life faithful and strong. These beads can help us to pray alongside them and strengthen our faith too.



To make a bead bracelet, thread beads representing the various parts of the Lord's Prayer onto a thin piece of leather, round elastic or pipe cleaner. Tie or bind the bracelet so that it can be slipped over

the wrist. As you touch the beads, pray the various parts of the prayer. You may like to use different coloured beads to help you remember the words. You can also use these bracelets as a way of remembering verses from scripture.



## Paint stones

Paint stones with words of encouragement such as 'love', 'joy', 'peace', 'patience', 'kindness', 'goodness', 'faithfulness', 'gentleness', 'self-control' (Galatians 5:22-23), or you may like to add a verse of scripture. As you paint, pray, holding your stone, for those who cannot freely express their faith. You might like to leave your stone out in the community for someone to find.

Gather or buy some smooth pebbles or stones. Paint them with a base coat of acrylic paint in a light colour. When dry, paint words on them or use an indelible marker pen. Decorate the stones then paint with clear varnish to protect the decoration.

## Starting and ending the event

You might like to begin your event by offering coffee and breakfast pastries as people arrive. You may like to offer tea and coffee and cakes throughout the day. Perhaps leave spaces at tables for those who just want to sit and chat. The Question Cards (download from [southwark.anglican.org/tkc](http://southwark.anglican.org/tkc)) can be available on the tables so that anyone can share in the discussion as and when they choose, whether they are taking part in the activities or not. The event could close with a prayer.

Please share with us your event and your photos to let us know what you did, conversations that were had, and if you intend to do anything going forward.

Please send your comments to: [mission@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:mission@southwark.anglican.org)

Thank you for all you are doing for FoRB and the people, often unseen, whose lives matter.

*The Revd Sue Thomas*