



BUDDHIST WORLD PRAYER GUIDE

**21 DAYS OF PRAYER
2024 EDITION**

Join Christians around the world
in prayer for our Buddhist neighbors



Welcome

to the 21 Days Buddhist World Prayer Guide

“Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder.” Romans 12:11-12 MSG Version

This first century admonition from the Apostle Paul could just as easily have been written today. With the lingering chaos from the pandemic, war in Ukraine, the new war in the Middle East, persecution of Jesus followers in much of the world, and economic recession, it is easy to just throw up our hands and ask, “what can one person do?”

Paul gives us the answer. Stay focused on the Word of God, expectant that He will respond, and “pray all the harder.”

With this guide we invite you to pray specifically that God will become known to the one billion people across the globe who are at least nominally Buddhist. Each day, beginning January 21, 2024, you will learn something about Buddhist practice and influence in a different place.

This prayer guide is being translated into 30 languages and distributed through over 5,000 prayer networks worldwide. You will be participating with more than 100 million Jesus followers in intercession for our Buddhist neighbors.

Many of the daily profiles focus on a specific city. This is intentional. The cities that are described are the same cities that prayer teams from the underground church are ministering in on the very days that you are praying! Your intercession over their work on the front lines is critically important.

We welcome you to join with us, to remain “cheerfully expectant,” and to “pray all the harder.”

Jesus Is Lord!



The origin of Buddhism



Prince Gautama was born in the southern part of modern-day Nepal in the sixth century BC. A local shaman noticed marks on the child's body and foretold that he would grow up to be a world ruler and enlightened one. His father, desiring Gautama to be a great ruler, sought to protect him by providing a life of luxury.

At age 29, however, Gautama was exposed to the suffering outside the palace where he lived. As a result he spent six years as a wandering ascetic in search of a solution to the problem of suffering. In vain he tried various meditation techniques, hoping for insight. Finally, he resolved to sit beneath a bodhi tree until he had attained the enlightenment he sought. Though tempted by Mara (the Evil One), he persisted and eventually achieved what he believed to be a realization of supreme truth. From that point on he was considered to be the "Buddha", which means an "Awakened One" or "Enlightened One".

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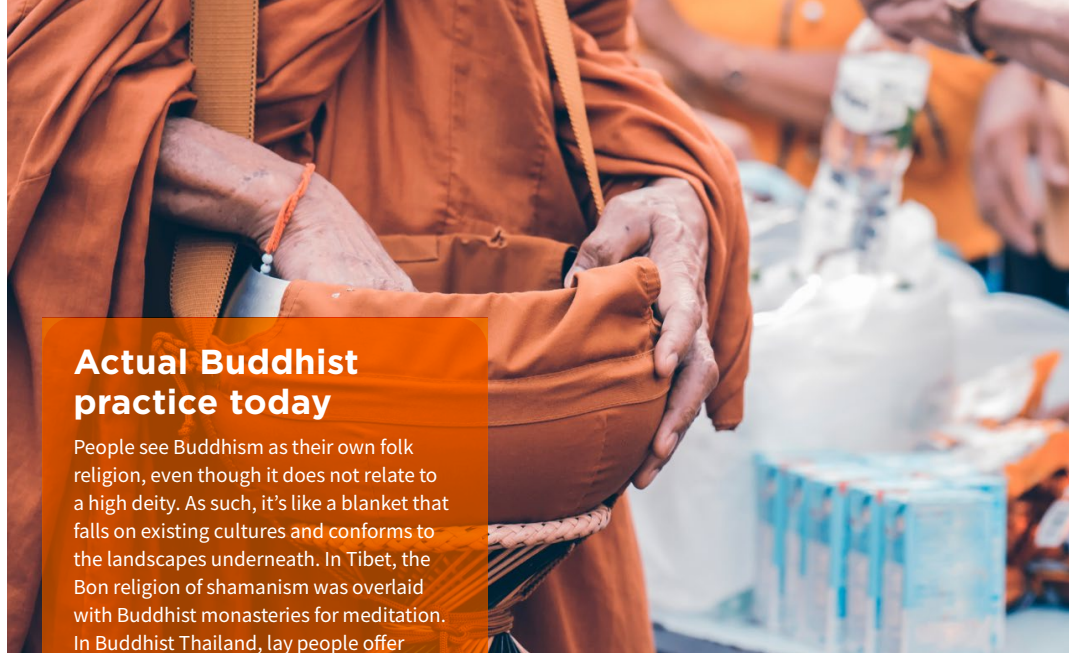
Buddhism

The teaching of Buddha (called the Dharma*)

The Buddha found his original companions in the search for enlightenment and preached his first sermon to them. Unlike most religions there was no supreme deity involved. Instead he outlined the “Four Noble Truths”:

1. **Life is full of suffering.**
2. **Suffering arises from ignorance and desire.**
3. **Suffering can only cease by ending ignorance and desire.**
4. **The way to end ignorance and desire is through the “Middle Way” or “Noble Eightfold Path”.**

“Suffering” according to the Buddha arises due to our clinging to and craving for impermanent things that keeps us all caught in an ongoing process of death and rebirth where everything, even one’s very self, is impermanent and an illusion. The only way to get off that endless cycle of rebirths is to walk the “The Middle Path”, avoiding extremes and living with right understanding, thought, speech, conduct, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, and finally right concentration. The end-goal is not eternal communion with God, but rather—like the flame of a candle being extinguished—a state where craving is ended.



Actual Buddhist practice today

People see Buddhism as their own folk religion, even though it does not relate to a high deity. As such, it’s like a blanket that falls on existing cultures and conforms to the landscapes underneath. In Tibet, the Bon religion of shamanism was overlaid with Buddhist monasteries for meditation. In Buddhist Thailand, lay people offer monks cigarettes in their alms bowls; in Buddhist Bhutan, however, smoking is a sin. The Thai Buddhist council strictly disallows women’s ordination and forbids women from entering holy places inside temple grounds, yet Nepal and England ordain female monks. Cambodian Buddhists have no discussion in the temple concerning care for the environment, while Western Buddhists incorporate environmental activism into their practice of the dharma.

** For clarity, this guide follows the Sanskrit spelling of Buddhist terms, rather than the Pali spelling. Dharma is the Sanskrit spelling; the Pali spelling would be dhamma.*

Buddhism

There are three major streams of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana and Tibetan.

Theravada Buddhism

emerged from Sri Lanka, where the Buddha's sermons and teachings were first canonized. It focuses on the attainment of enlightenment through personal meditation and good deeds. Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos follow this tradition.

Mahayana Buddhism

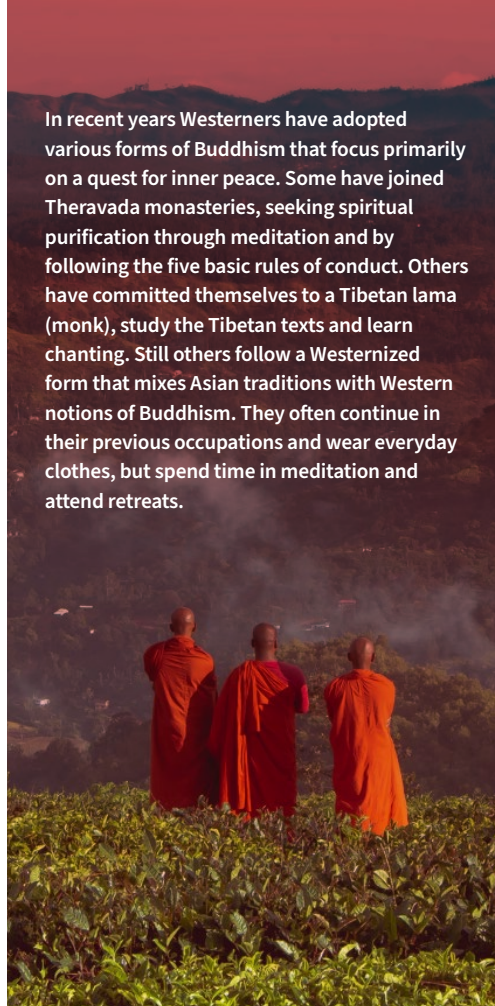
emerged based on texts attributed to Buddha, which taught that a bodhisattva, or enlightened being, could choose to delay entering nirvana (the ultimate spiritual goal of liberation) to deliver other sentient beings from their karmic suffering (based on a person's past actions). This stream of Buddhism was traditionally practiced in China, Japan, Vietnam and the Korean peninsula.

Tibetan Buddhism

arose in India in AD sixth century, with a focus on accelerating enlightenment through ritual practices and visualizing heavenly bodhisattvas.

In recent years Westerners have adopted various forms of Buddhism that focus primarily on a quest for inner peace. Some have joined Theravada monasteries, seeking spiritual purification through meditation and by following the five basic rules of conduct. Others have committed themselves to a Tibetan lama (monk), study the Tibetan texts and learn chanting. Still others follow a Westernized form that mixes Asian traditions with Western notions of Buddhism. They often continue in their previous occupations and wear everyday clothes, but spend time in meditation and attend retreats.

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Countries with more than 1,000,000 Buddhists

Country	Country population 2020	Buddhist Population 2020	Percentage 2020
China	1,439,324,000	228,117,000	15.8%
Japan	126,476,000	70,539,000	55.8%
Thailand	69,800,000	60,846,000	87.2%
Viet Nam	97,339,000	47,334,000	48.6%
Myanmar	54,410,000	40,469,000	74.4%
Sri Lanka	21,413,000	21,413,000	68.0%
Cambodia	1,6719,000	14,380,000	86.0%
South Korea	51,269,000	12,637,000	24.6%
India	1,380,004,000	9,799,000	0.7%

Country	Country population 2020	Buddhist Population 2020	Percentage 2020
Taiwan	23,817,000	6,304,000	36.5%
United States	331,003,000	4,300,000	1.3%
Laos	7,276,000	3,815,000	52.4%
Nepal	29,137,000	3,546,000	12.2%
Indonesia	273,524,000	2,185,000	0.8%
Mongolia	3,278,000	1,906,000	58.1%
Malaysia	32,366,000	1,712,000	5.3%
Bangladesh	164,689,000	1,182,000	0.7%
Hong Kong	7,497,000	1,170,000	15.6%

Data source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, eds., *World Religion Database* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, accessed October 2022)

Bangkok

JANUARY 21



“And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world.”

Matthew 24:14 (KJV)

Bangkok, Thailand’s capital, is known for ornate shrines and vibrant street life. Nearly 90% of the just over 11 million residents are practicing Buddhists.

Notable areas in the city are the Rattanakosin royal district, home to the opulent Grand Palace and its sacred Wat Phra Kaew Temple. Nearby is Wat Pho Temple with an enormous reclining Buddha and, on the opposite shore, Wat Arun Temple with its steep steps and Khmer-style spire.

One of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, Bangkok has grown rapidly in the past 30 years. Almost 40% of the population is age 20 or younger. One challenge for the city is the influx of young people moving from rural villages to the city seeking work and education.

The sex and human trafficking trades are active in Bangkok and throughout Thailand, despite the government’s efforts to eradicate them. It is estimated that more than 600,000 victims of trafficking are in the country. Many of these victims are children trapped in the sex trade in the numerous brothels in Bangkok.

People Groups: 21 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

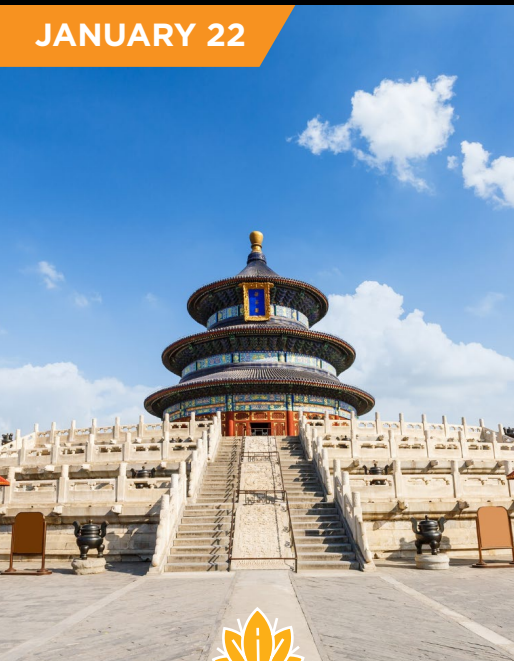
- Praise God that national leaders now have a bold goal to reach every one of Thailand’s 80,000 villages and neighborhoods with the gospel!
- Pray for the national leaders’ plans: a national prayer network and the development of native leaders.
- Pray for a breakthrough in church growth, for which many church and mission leaders feel Thailand is ready.
- Pray that Thailand’s religious freedom, which is more than most of SE Asia, continues



Nearly 90% of the just over 11 million residents are practicing Buddhists.

Beijing

JANUARY 22



“Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.”

1 Chronicles 16:24 (NKJV)

Beijing is the sprawling capital city of the People’s Republic of China. It is the world’s most populous capital city with over 21 million residents. The majority population of Beijing are Han Chinese. Hui (Chinese Muslims), Manchus, and Mongols are the largest minority groups.

Founded more than 3,000 years ago, the city is a unique mixture of the ancient and the modern. One of the best known structures in Beijing is the massive Tiananmen Square pedestrian plaza, which contains the tomb of Mao Zedong. Adjacent to the Square is the Forbidden City, a collection of palaces and royal buildings that were the political and ritual center of China for more than 500 years.

Contrasting with the history of the Forbidden City, the immense Great Hall of the People is on the West side of Tiananmen Square. With more than 1.85 million square feet covering the equivalent of two city blocks, the Great Hall is the home of the National People’s Congress and government offices.

While there are government-approved churches in Beijing, police carefully monitor the people who attend. Persecution of the underground Christian church has increased since 2019, with many house churches closed and their leaders arrested. The heavy restrictions during Covid also limited the ability of the house churches to function.

People Groups: 5 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for 50 new Christ-exalting multiplying house churches amongst the people groups of Beijing.
- Pray for a Bible in Chinese sign language and Chinese Jinyu.
- Pray for the hundreds of millions of rural dwellers that have relocated to China’s urban centers like Beijing. Many millions cannot support their families and end up in cities without basic social services or educational opportunities, which creates overcrowding and unemployment.
- Pray for God to restrain the lawlessness and stronghold of abortion (13 million abortions every year in China).



Persecution of the underground Christian church has increased since 2019, with many house churches closed and their leaders arrested.

Bhutan

JANUARY 23



“We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments.”

Romans 10:4 (NLT)

Bhutan is a tiny kingdom nestled in the Himalayas. Tibetan Buddhism is woven into every fiber of Bhutanese culture. Bhutan is portrayed as one of the happiest places on earth, yet Bhutanese people’s lives are filled with fear. These fears are centered around appeasing local deities and warding off evil with religious rituals. The elderly can often be found in trance-like states spinning prayer wheels and reciting mantras in hope of a better life after death.

Bhutan is isolated from the rest of the world not just by its terrain, but also because of its suspicion of outsiders. Visas cost \$250 a day, and visitors must always be accompanied by a registered guide. Visiting a temple or other areas requires special permits.

Christianity is highly restricted in Bhutan. To convert to Christianity could mean losing jobs and being disowned by family and friends. Having a house church or even a meeting with friends with the intent of sharing the love of Jesus can result in imprisonment.

There is a fledgling group of Tibetan Buddhists that have turned to Jesus, less than 1,000 at this time.

Ways To Pray:

- Pray that the small but growing group of Jesus followers would stay firm in their faith and be bold to share the good news with those who are most broken.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to create a massive outpouring across Bhutan that leads to visions of Jesus and a spiritual openness in every segment of society.
- Pray for the gospel to be taught through oral stories and traditional art forms as literacy is low and tools for evangelism in their language are very limited.



Having a house church or even a meeting with friends with the intent of sharing the love of Jesus can result in imprisonment.

Buddhist Diaspora

JANUARY 24



“When a foreigner lives with you in your land, don’t take advantage of him. Treat the foreigner the same as a native. Love him like one of your own. Remember that you were once foreigners in Egypt. I am GOD, your God.”

Leviticus 19:33-34 (MSG)

Many of the adherents of Buddhism live in poverty. Children are sold to pay debts, alcoholism is a common problem, and life is a constant attempt to ‘make merit.’

When an opportunity arises to go to another country for work or education, young Buddhists grab ahold of it. Some can relocate with the help of a relative who has gone before them. Many young women will marry foreign nationals and go to their country.

Often, however, Buddhists get to their new location and find it very difficult to assimilate into the new culture. Language and customs are so different, and they are frequently ignored or sometimes discriminated against.

Buddhist temples may provide some familiar customs, but the monks can do little to relieve the loneliness and frustration.

Many of these people would be willing to discuss spiritual things if only someone would take the time.

How can you connect with Buddhists in your town to tell them your Jesus story and the Gospel message?

Ways To Pray:

- Pray that Western Jesus followers will actively seek the Buddhists in their midst and introduce the Prince of Peace.
- Pray that Buddhist background believers living abroad will become disciples and tell their families back home, so they also can become disciples.



Buddhist temples may provide some familiar customs, but the monks can do little to relieve the loneliness and frustration.

Chengdu

JANUARY 25



“They will proclaim My glory among the nations.”

Isaiah 66:19 (NIV)

Chengdu is the capital of southwestern China’s Sichuan province. Chengdu has a population of 16.5 million and a history that dates to at least the 4th century BC.

After World War 2, Chengdu was briefly the home of the Nationalist Republican Government until it withdrew to Taipei. Under the PRC, Chengdu has become a major manufacturing and defense industry hub. It is also ranked as one of the world’s 30 top cities by scientific research output. More than 300 of the Fortune 500 companies have established branches in Chengdu.

Chengdu is one of the prototypes for China’s new urban planning model: the “Great City.” This is a hyper-dense satellite city centered around a central mass transit hub where any location in the city is within a 15-minute walk. This plan is intended to provide an affordable high-quality lifestyle for all residents.

The majority population in Chengdu is Han Chinese, but 54 ethnic minorities are living here as well. They comprise roughly 18% of the residents. Buddhism is the primary religion, with Confucianism also practiced. There is very little Christian influence.

People Groups: 19 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for 50 Spirit-led multiplying house churches in each of the 19 people groups in this city!
- Pray for a Bible in Mawo and Mianchi Qiang languages.
- Pray that the influence of Western businesspeople will open opportunities to introduce Jesus to their Chengdu counterparts.



Buddhism is the primary religion, with Confucianism also practiced. There is very little Christian influence.

Chongqing

JANUARY 26



“But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the Word and understands it.”

Matthew 13:23 (NIV)

Chongqing is the fourth largest Chinese city by urban population, with 16.34 million people as of 2020. Located at the confluence of the Yangtze and Jialing rivers in Southwestern China, it is the main shipping hub for the vast west central part of China.

With a history stretching 3,000 years, Chongqing has been an important political, economic, and strategic center in China’s west. Chongqing was the planet’s fastest-growing urban area for the first decade of the 21st century. It has been the focal point of the central government’s “go West” economic development plans.

A manufacturing center, Chongqing produces more automobiles than any other city in China. It also produced more than 8 million motorcycles, 280 million mobile phones, and 58 million laptops in 2020. Much of the power for this rapid industrialization has been provided by the building of the Three Gorges Dam.

Like many of China’s cities, the influx of people from rural villages has created an obvious wealth disparity. The city has nearly a million menial workers making an average of 50 yuan a day (\$6.85).

People Groups: 3 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for this incredible development to be managed with political fairness, financial transparency, and environmental responsibility for the long-term benefit of the tens of millions in the region.
- Church growth in Chongqing is steady, solid, and significantly faster than even the rapid population growth of this booming region. Pray that leaders are raised to strengthen the faith of new believers.
- High-tech facial recognition cameras and software are now required to be installed in all state-sanctioned churches. Pray for the underground church leaders who are experiencing severe persecution.



With a history stretching 3,000 years, Chongqing has been an important political, economic, and strategic center in China’s west.

Hangzhou

JANUARY 27



“We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 4:20 (NIV)

Considered one of the most beautiful cities in all of China, Hangzhou is the capital of the Zhejiang province. It is located at the south end of the ancient Grand Canal waterway that originates in Beijing. Hangzhou is one of the seven earliest capitals of China and today is one of the leading cities visited by tourists in China.

The West Lake area has been a popular theme for poets and artists since the 9th century. It includes over 60 cultural relic sites, several islands reachable by boat, temples, pavilions, gardens, and arched bridges. Marco Polo, after visiting Hangzhou, proclaimed it as the finest and most luxurious city in the world.

Hangzhou was the host of the 2023 Asian Games. It is the permanent home of the World Leisure Expo, the China International Animation Festival, and the China International Micro Film Festival.

While most residents are conversant in Mandarin, the common language is the Wu dialect spoken throughout much of eastern China. Migration of workers and students from the rural areas has perpetuated this usage of the traditional language.

Hangzhou is considered an oasis for religion. While Buddhism is the predominant faith, Taoism, Islam, and Christianity are tolerated. The region's most famous universities and hospitals were founded by Catholic orders and the Presbyterian Missions. While there was some persecution of Christians in the early 2000s, today there are several Christian and Catholic churches that meet openly.

People Groups: 5 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for continued freedom to worship together.
- Pray that the saving grace of Jesus can be effectively communicated to the young workers who have come to Hangzhou and that they will carry the message back to their homes.
- Pray for wisdom for the medical staff and teachers at the hospitals and universities, both in their work with the people of Hangzhou and to know when to share their Jesus story.



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Hanoi

JANUARY 28



“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 (NKJV)

The capital of Vietnam, Hanoi is known for its centuries-old architecture and rich culture with Southeast Asian, French, and Chinese influences. At its heart is the chaotic Old Quarter, where the narrow streets are roughly arranged by trade.

A major tourist destination, Hanoi offers well-preserved French colonial architecture as well as religious sites dedicated to Buddhism, Catholicism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Hanoi is sometimes referred to as the “Paris of the East” with its tree-lined boulevards, more than 20 lakes, and thousands of French Colonial buildings.

The majority religion is Buddhism, with Mahayana Buddhism widely practiced. Smaller groups practice Theravada and Hoa Hao Buddhism. That being said, the actual practice of most of the population, particularly in the rural areas outside of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, is focused on ancestor worship and the existence of spirits. Many Buddhist temples accommodate folk traditions along with the traditional Buddhist practices.

Christianity is a minority group, roughly 8% of the population. Most of these identify as Catholic with a smaller group following Protestantism. French missionaries are largely responsible for this abnormally large segment of the population regularly attending church services, worshiping, and engaging in prayer and religious studies. The churches represent not only places of worship but important cultural and historical landmarks within the city.

People Groups: 10 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray that the leaders of the Christian churches will be empowered to share with their neighbors the life-saving message of the gospel.
- The Vietnamese diaspora is seeing many become believers. Pray that these Jesus followers will bring the gospel back to Hanoi.
- Pray that the light of the gospel will provide hope and purpose to those who are lost.
- Pray for the continued maturation of the Christian church in Hanoi and that they have the resources to powerfully share their faith to the neighborhoods around their churches.



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Ho Chi Minh City

JANUARY 29



“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

Acts 10:15 (NIV)

Formerly known as Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City is the most populous city in Vietnam with over 9 million people. The capital of French Indochina and then South Vietnam for many years, the city was renamed in 1975 in honor of Ho Chi Minh.

The city is the economic engine of Vietnam, generating just over 25% of the GDP. It is a major center for finance, media, technology, education, and transportation. Many multi-national companies have offices here. Tan Son Nhat International Airport accounts for half of the international arrivals into the country.

The majority population of Ho Chi Minh City are ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh) at about 93%. The rest of the residents are mostly Chinese, with a smattering of Korean, Japanese, American, and South African expats.

The city recognizes 13 separate religions, with 2 million residents identifying as “religious.” 60% of these are Buddhist, followed by Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims. Vietnam’s constitution, ratified in 2013, affirmed the right to belief and religious freedom as a fundamental right of the people. The adoption of the Law on Beliefs and Religion in 2016 created a firm legal framework for protecting this right.

The result of the relative freedom of belief is that there are over 8,000 religious festivals celebrated in the country each year. Religious organizations have more than 500 medical facilities, over 800 social protection establishments, and 300 preschools.

People Groups: 12 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray thanks for the two-day evangelistic outreach in the city with Franklin Graham in 2023. More than 14,000 people attended.
- Pray for the local church leaders who are discipling these new believers.
- Pray for multiplying house churches throughout the city and all of southern Vietnam.
- Pray that leaders within the 12 people groups come to know the living Jesus and influence their entire group.
- Pray that the freedom of belief in Vietnam leads to the raising up and training of missionaries to other parts of Southeast Asia.



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Hong Kong

JANUARY 30



“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

John 20:21 (NIV)

Hong Kong, long known as a British colony and international trading hub, became an Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China in 1997. While it remains a significant financial center and commercial port, the last 20+ years have not been without crisis as Hong Kong attempts to adjust to changing directives from the central government.

The population of Hong Kong is nearly 90% Han Chinese. The majority of the remaining people are Filipino and Indonesian workers. More than half the population identifies as having no religion. Of those who do claim a religious preference, 28% are Buddhist, while Protestant and Catholic combined are 12%.

Prior to the transfer of control to the Chinese government, meaningful religious freedom existed in Hong Kong. Open worship was allowed, and publication and distribution of religious materials was tolerated.

However, in recent years there have been significant human rights issues and political unrest as the central government has exerted increasing control over the region. While international trade and tourism continue unabated, the relative freedoms for worship and missions activity have been seriously restricted under the leadership of Xi Jinping.

People Groups: 10 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for protection for those that continue to produce and distribute Christian media.
- Hong Kong has some of the highest wealth inequality among developed economies. Pray that existing and new initiatives from the local churches will reach those most in need.
- Pray that both the local and international churches in Hong Kong would cooperate in unity to care for those in need.
- Pray for protection for the missions workers and underground church leaders in this city.



However, in recent years there have been significant human rights issues and political unrest as the central government has exerted increasing control over the region.

India

JANUARY 31



See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

Buddha was born in Nepal but achieved enlightenment in India. In the midst of a morally strict Hindu society, he preached “the Middle Way” in an effort to find common ground between the extreme ascetic wing of Hinduism and the more common practices that resulted in greed and exploitation on the other.

Some have called Buddhism a reform movement of Hinduism. Now, over 2,600 years later, Hindus in India are finding Buddha’s teaching attractive and are converting again. This is caused by the caste system that still governs the society.

The Dalits, also known as the Scheduled Castes, and the Adivasis/indigenous people, also known as the Scheduled Tribes, comprise 25% of the population. These groups have been oppressed for thousands of years due to the caste system. Women and children suffer the most. Estimates are that 35 million children are orphans, 11 million are abandoned (90% of these are girls), and 3 million live on the streets.

The Church in India is highly diverse. Orthodox churches trace their heritage to the Apostle Thomas. Catholics represent the largest group in India with 20 million believers and are respected for their work with the poor. In the last 15 years evangelical and Pentecostal denominations have seen explosive growth.

At the same time, persecution of the Christian church has been steadily increasing in recent years. In parts of India, Hindu mobs have burned churches and killed Jesus followers. There have been few repercussions, however, since 80% of believers are from the lower castes.

Ways To Pray:

- Pray that the Dalits and other ‘lower castes’ would come to realize that Jesus accepts all people.
- Pray that church leaders, especially in rural areas, are able to stand against Hindu persecution.
- Pray for training for pastors, teachers, evangelists, and missionaries.



Some have called Buddhism a reform movement of Hinduism. Now, over 2,600 years later, Hindus in India are finding Buddha’s teaching attractive and are converting again.

Japan

FEBRUARY 1



“The whole earth will acknowledge the Lord and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him.”

Psalm 22:27 (NLT)

While Japan has traditionally been classified as a Buddhist nation, the reality is that it has become increasingly post-religious. Some Buddhist practices are continued, such as visiting and maintaining ancestral graves, wearing of good luck amulets, and registering births at the local Buddhist temple. However, most Japanese citizens, particularly those under the age of 50, do not identify as followers of any religion.

In this highly competitive society, it is often considered weak to be religious. Some have called Japan “a superpower without a moral compass.” One result of this ennui is a high suicide rate, especially among young people. More than 30,000 each year take their own lives.

Many Japanese will pick aspects of Shintoism, Buddhism, and occult or animistic practices and develop their own personal faith without concern about contradictions. A heavy emphasis in this belief system is that gods are everywhere, including the stones, trees, clouds, and grass.

Since very few Christians are in Japan, obtaining bibles and other faith-based literature is difficult. Related to this is the fact that many of the current pastors are elderly but can’t retire as there is no one to take over their congregation.

The majority of the Christian community in Japan is women. Men work so many hours, they do not have time for religion. This becomes a self-reinforcing problem—having few men in a church confirms the misconception that church is primarily a place for women.

Ways To Pray:

- With the world’s lowest birth rate and highest life expectancy, Japan has a rapidly aging population. Pray for more Christian nursing homes and hospices and for more Christian health workers from other countries to fill positions.
- Ask God to remove the spirit of delusion that leads to worship of the occult.
- Pray for a new generation of Christian leaders to be developed in Japan.
- Pray that Japanese men will overcome the cultural stereotype of weakness associated with men of faith.



The majority of the Christian community in Japan is women. Men work so many hours, they do not have time for religion.

Phnom Penh

FEBRUARY 2



“I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 13:47 (ESV)

Cambodia’s capital and most populous city, Phnom Penh is home to 2.5 million people. It has been the national capital since the days of the French colonists. Its location at the junction of two major rivers, the Mekong and Tonle Sap, also makes it the industrial, economic, and cultural center of the country.

Known for its ornate royal palace, Phnom Penh also has a massive art deco central market, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, and the Wat Phnom Daun Penh Buddhist temple.

When the Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia in 1975, they forcibly evacuated the entire population of Phnom Penh and drove its residents into the countryside. The city remained virtually deserted until Vietnamese forces invaded Cambodia and overthrew the Khmer Rouge in 1979.

Phnom Penh was gradually repopulated in the following years. Because of the virtual extermination of Cambodia’s educated class by the Khmer Rouge, the city’s educational institutions faced a long and difficult period of recovery.

More than 97% of the people of Cambodia are Khmer and are overwhelming Theravada Buddhist. However, there is a rapidly growing population of evangelical Christians. According to Joshua Project, Christians are currently just 2% of the population but are growing at an annual rate of 8.8%.

The constitution provides for freedom of belief and religious worship, as long as such freedom neither interferes with others’ beliefs and religions nor violates public order and security. There is a ban on door-to-door evangelism or using loudspeakers for proselytizing activities. Open-ended assistance activities by missions groups are encouraged.

People Groups: 11 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray against the spirit of idolatry and ancestor worship that binds the Khmer people in darkness.
- Pray for the young people of Phnom Penh, many of whom are chasing after material wealth as a source of happiness. May they find the true Source!
- Ask God to heal the deep psychological wounds that remain from the Khmer Rouge period through the Holy Spirit and counseling ministries.
- Pray for additional near culture workers to come to Phnom Penh to share the name of Jesus.



More than 97% of the people of Cambodia are Khmer and are overwhelming Theravada Buddhist.

Shanghai

FEBRUARY 3



“How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?”

Romans 10:14 (NASB)

Shanghai, on China’s central coast, is the country’s biggest city and has become a global financial hub. It is one of the world’s largest seaports and a major industrial and commercial center of China. Shanghai was one of the first Chinese ports to be opened to Western trade, and it long dominated the nation’s commerce.

The heart of the city is the Bund, a famed waterfront promenade lined with colonial-era buildings. Across the Huangpu River rises the Pudong district’s futuristic skyline, including the 632-meter-tall Shanghai Tower and the Oriental Pearl TV Tower with distinctive pink spheres.

Many different religious groups are in Shanghai, to include Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and Popular Folk Religion. Taoism and Buddhism have the biggest following, while Shanghai also boasts the largest Catholic presence in mainland China.

The reality, though, is that the government insists that all religious activity is limited to state-sanctioned religious bodies. Congregations formed apart from these, like the Jesus following “house church” movement, are illegal. Their buildings can be confiscated, leaders imprisoned, and members fined.

Nevertheless, over the last four decades, Christianity has grown faster in China than anywhere else in the world. Underground cell churches meet throughout Shanghai, and the estimate is that there are now more than 100 million Chinese followers of Jesus.

People Groups: 3 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for a renewed value for life to abolish abortion, suicide, abandonment, and human trafficking.
- Pray for continued Church growth and pure biblical teaching amid ongoing persecution.
- Pray for those imprisoned for their faith to remain strong.
- Pray also that all followers of Christ working in state structures might walk faultlessly and be a redemptive force within the government.



Taoism and Buddhism have the biggest following, while Shanghai also boasts the largest Catholic presence in mainland China.

Shenyang

FEBRUARY 4



“That God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself.”

2 Corinthians 5:19 NKJV

Shenyang is the capital of Liaoning province, located in northeast China, with a population of 8 million. It was founded 300 years before Christ and has become one of the nation’s most important industrial centers.

The city was once the Qing dynasty’s capital, and the lavish Mukden Palace remains as one of the landmarks from this period. The city was occupied by the Japanese from 1931 to 1945.

This is one of the most ethnically religiously diverse cities in China. It is home to 37 of China’s 55 ethnic minorities and has the world’s second largest Korean town.

Presbyterian missionaries brought the gospel to Shenyang in 1872. Today the city, like most of China, recognizes five religious beliefs, including Protestantism.

People Groups: 37 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for a spirit of cooperation among the leaders of churches in Shenyang.
- Pray that the believers in Shenyang will grow in humility and the capacity to listen and submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- Pray that more pastors will be able to receive further training and be better equipped for their ministries.
- Pray for single believers in Shenyang struggling to find spouses. Ask God to provide for their needs and sustain them in their loneliness.



This is one of the most ethnically religiously diverse cities in China.

Taiyuan

FEBRUARY 5



“But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am too young.’ You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you;” declares the Lord.”

Jeremiah 1:7-8 (NIV)

Taiyuan is a city of just over 4 million people located in the northeast part of China. It is an industrial center focusing on energy and heavy chemicals. It was founded more than 2,500 years ago and is surrounded on three sides by mountains.

The geography surrounding Taiyuan is mineral rich. Coal mining and production is a mainstay of the local economy, which led to the city being declared as one of the 10 worst air quality locations in the world during the 1990s. While this has been substantially remediated, there is still significant pollution.

More than 90% of the people living in Taiyuan are Han Chinese, speaking Mandarin. Religious preferences in this area are traditional folk religions (27.9%), Buddhism (19.8%), and 23.9% identifying as nonbelievers. Amongst other faiths the Catholic church has the leading presence with several large churches.

People Groups: 1 Unreached People Group

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for boldness for the Chinese believers in this city.
- Pray that restrictions on meetings and Internet conversations implemented during covid will continue to be relaxed.
- Pray for the eyes of the people to be opened and to recognize that folk religion and ancestor worship is not the power they seek, Jesus is.
- Pray strength for house church leaders as they endure persecution.



Religious preferences in this area are traditional folk religions (27.9%), Buddhism (19.8%), and 23.9% identifying as nonbelievers.

Ulaanbaatar

FEBRUARY 6



“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”

2 Timothy 2:2 (NIV)

Ulaanbaatar is the capital city of Mongolia and the most populous city in the nation with just under 2 million inhabitants. Ulaanbaatar is also the coldest capital city in the world as measured by average temperature.

As the cultural and business center of Mongolia and a hub connecting the Trans-Siberian Railway with the Chinese rail system, Ulaanbaatar has become a thriving urban center in one of the most remote locations in the world. Located in a river valley surrounded by mountains that trap smog, the city is also the most polluted capital city in the world during the winter months.

During the decades of Communist domination that ended in 1992, all religions were suppressed, but since that time there has been a general revival of faith. 52% of the people of Ulaanbaatar identify as Mahayana Buddhist. Of the remaining, 40% are non-religious, 5.4% are Muslim, 4.2% hold to folk religion, and 2.2% are Christian. The Christian population includes Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Mormons.

People Groups: 6 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray that the Lord will continue to raise up wise and godly leaders for the church here.
- Pray for those who rescue girls from the streets.
- Pray that men would step up and take seriously their roles in the family, community, and church.
- Pray that actions and attitudes of Jesus followers in the workplace would be a bold witness to their colleagues.



During the decades of Communist domination that ended in 1992, all religions were suppressed, but since that time there has been a general revival of faith.

United States

FEBRUARY 7



“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ.”

Colossians 2:8 (NIV)

Los Angeles is the most diverse Buddhist city in the world. With 300 temples and meditation centers from nearly every Buddhist sect in the world, LA encompasses the entire spectrum of Buddhist beliefs.

Buddhist ideas are actively promoted in the US and throughout Western societies through images of peace, calm, and wisdom without any discussion of the worldview behind the façade. For example, the “Compassionate schools” program promotes itself as secular yet was developed by a professor of Tibetan Buddhist studies. The curriculum is based on two Tibetan Buddhist tenets of “mindfulness” and “contemplation.”

Buddhist worldview is actively celebrated in movies such as Star Wars, Kill Bill, and Dr. Strange. Business leaders like the late Steve Jobs of Apple actively promote Buddhist meditation. Local garden centers will frequently have a Buddha figurine available to evoke calm in people’s yards.

Buddhist meditation is popular on college campuses. The contrast with Christian meditation couldn’t be starker. In Buddhist meditation the focus is on emptying the mind, while Christian meditation fills the mind with Scripture and gazing on God’s beauty.

Ways To Pray:

- Ask that God will open the eyes of people who don’t understand that the true end of Buddhism is the annihilation of self.
- Pray that American Buddhists will be set free from merit-making and bondage to evil spirits.
- Pray that Jesus followers here in America will engage with and pray for Buddhist friends and neighbors with love, mercy, and the truth of Jesus.



Buddhist worldview is actively celebrated in movies such as Star Wars, Kill Bill, and Dr. Strange.

Vientiane

FEBRUARY 8



“For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 13:47 (NIV)

Vientiane, Laos’ national capital, mixes French-colonial architecture with Buddhist temples such as the golden, 16th-century Pha That Luang, which is a national symbol. It is a city of just 1 million people in a landlocked country that is the poorest in southeast Asia.

Vientiane is one of the few world capitals that lack the look and feel of what most Westerners would consider a city, being somewhere between a big town and a diminutive city.

Since 1975 the Communist government has strictly controlled the country. Christianity was initially declared an “enemy of the state.” This drove many of the believers out of the country and those who remained underground. Today Christianity is one of four government-approved religions, but open churches are closely scrutinized. Intense persecution and restrictions still occur, mostly at the local level.

In 2020, 52% of the population identified as Theravada Buddhist. 43% followed some form of polytheistic ethnic religion. Three churches are categorized as “Christian” by the government: Lao Evangelical Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church, and Roman Catholic Church. All religious groups must register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. Any proselytizing in public spaces is strictly prohibited.

People Groups: 9 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for Lao seekers to toss aside the social pressure to practice Buddhism and place their hope in the one true God.
- Pray for believers to unashamedly proclaim the Gospel to their neighbors despite close government monitoring.
- Pray for house church leaders who are singled out as targets of persecution to persevere with grace.



Today Christianity is one of four government-approved religions, but open churches are closely scrutinized. Intense persecution and restrictions still occur, mostly at the local level.

Xian

FEBRUARY 9



“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.”

1 Chronicles 16:24 (NIV)

Xi'an is a large city and capital of Shaanxi Province in central China. Once known as Chang'an (Eternal Peace), it marks the Silk Road's eastern end and was home to the Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties' ruling houses. It was the capital for 1,100 years and remains a symbol of China's ancient history and past glories.

Since the 1980s, as part of the economic growth of inland China, Xi'an has re-emerged as a cultural, industrial, political and educational center of the entire central-northwest region, with many facilities for research and development.

Of interesting note, the burial place of the first sovereign emperor, Shi Huangdi of the Qin dynasty (221–207 BCE), is near Xi'an. The famous terra cotta soldiers were discovered here in 1974.

Due to its location in the country and the diversity of people groups who live here, Xi'an has adherents to a variety of religions. Buddhism is the primary religion, closely followed by Taoism. Muslims have been present in Xi'an since the 700s AD, and Xi'an's Great Mosque is one of the largest in China.

The Christian presence in Xi'an is quite small. In 2022 one of the “approved” churches, the Church of Abundance, a historical house church, was deemed to be a cult by the local police. Funds were confiscated, leaders arrested, and homes of believers raided.

People Groups: 15 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for Xi'an's educational institutions and its student populations.
- Pray against a rising divorce rate in China.
- Pray for the leaders and members of the Church of Abundance as they are the focus of government scrutiny.
- Pray that new Jesus followers from Xi'an will carry the message back to their families in the village they came from.



Buddhism is the primary religion, closely followed by Taoism.

Yangon

FEBRUARY 10



“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Matthew 28:20 (NIV)

While no longer the capital city, Yangon (formerly known as Rangoon) is the largest city in Myanmar (formerly Burma) with more than 7 million residents. A mix of British colonial architecture, modern high-rises and gilded Buddhist pagodas define the skyline of Yangon.

Yangon boasts the largest number of colonial-era buildings in Southeast Asia and has a unique colonial-era urban core that is remarkably intact. At the center of this district is the Sule Pagoda, reputed to be over 2,000 years old. The city is also home to the gilded Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar’s most sacred and famous Buddhist pagoda.

While Christianity has established a secure foothold in Yangon with 8% of the population, 85% identify as Theravada Buddhist. Islam is also present with 4% of the population practicing Muslims.

Religious conflict has had a consistent presence in Myanmar. Christianity was long considered a carry-over from British colonial rule. Today it is the Rohingya Muslims that are being singled out. The ongoing tension between the military and civilian government is often exemplified with religious persecution.

People Groups: 17 Unreached People Groups

Ways To Pray:

- Pray for wisdom and tolerance for the leaders in the capital city of Nay Pyi Taw.
- Pray for the refugees who have fled military violence in the country.
- Pray that much needed food, water, and medical supplies will reach those who are in need.
- Pray for a means for recovery from the cyclones and other natural disasters of the last few years.



While Christianity has established a secure foothold in Yangon with 8% of the population, 85% identify as Theravada Buddhist.

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