

Monday 30th November

The Caucasus

Covering an 18,000-foot high mountain range between Europe and Asia, this beautiful area between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea is home to one of the world's highest concentrations of unengaged



Muslim people groups. Many of these groups are so obscure that they remain relatively unknown to most churches and sending agencies.

More languages are spoken there than almost anywhere else in the world. Of the 45 languages in this region, many have been categorised as some of the most difficult in the world. This adds to the challenge of reaching the dozens of Muslim people groups here that are completely unengaged by the gospel. But God is moving in the Caucasus region particularly through this time of the coronavirus pandemic.

Covid-19 has impacted this region greatly. At the time of writing, Russia was fourth in the world in terms of total reported cases of the virus, as the second wave has hit the region. The number of people in hospital and dying from the virus was rising again too. But, as in so many other countries, God has used these circumstances to bring local believers and churches together to meet those in need of food and humanitarian aid. Social media is also being used more widely with great potential to reach many people when there is no other means of doing so. Some villages have been very hard to notice or even access. Covid has awakened the church to have eyes to see these villages, because of news broadcasts about them.

Workers and local ministries are coming together to provide media content and oversee its distribution with interested seekers of Jesus. We have heard stories of local Muslim background believers overcoming their fears to reach out to others and those who were formerly persecuted for their faith have been called upon for their peace and calm in this time of great uncertainty. God is moving and making His name known in the Caucasus!

- Let's take a moment to praise and thank God for all He is doing in the Caucasus region.
- Please pray for the people of the Caucasus, many of whom live in remote locations and impoverished circumstances and are especially vulnerable to the virus. Ask that in these times of great difficulty they will encounter Jesus and know His transforming love and provision for them and their families.
- Pray that the different social media tools that are being developed would be effective in spreading the gospel to men and women, young and old, and will be available in many languages for all to access.

Tuesday 1st December

The current conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan

For centuries, this region has seen conflict. Over the past few weeks, the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan has been in the international news. On the 27th of September this year, the decades-long conflict over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh erupted again. This is a small piece of land between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Southern Caucasus. It is recognised internationally as part of Azerbaijan but most of the population are ethnic Armenian and it is under Armenian control. The two countries fought a bloody war over the region in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although



Source Wikimedia Commons

they declared a ceasefire, they have never managed to agree a peace treaty. The latest fighting is the worst since the ceasefire in 1994.

The divisions are not just political and historical, but also religious. Armenia is predominantly a Christian nation with strong ties to Russia, while Azerbaijan is predominantly Muslim with strong ties to Turkey.

At the time of writing another ceasefire that was due to have come into effect on the 18th of October had been broken. Three ceasefires have so far failed. The latest fighting has led to hundreds if not thousands of deaths on both sides, many of them civilians. Mothers have fled with their children as refugees, while their husbands have gone to fight. Families don't know when they will be reunited.

Mission Network news reported one person who had written to say their cousin had joined the army but had been listed as killed. Another man who used to be a restaurant manager is now on the front line fighting and doesn't know if he will ever see his family again.

- Pray for the national leaders involved in this conflict to relent and work out a peace agreement to end the violence.
- Pray that even in the middle of this violence, many would hear the good news and be transformed by the gospel.
- Pray for families torn apart by this conflict. Let's cry out to God for them to find a place of refuge and help and for them to be reunited with their loved ones and able to return home soon.

Sources: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/armenia-and-azerbaijan-break-another-truce/> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54324772> and <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-54614392>

Wednesday 2nd December

Pray for our workers and local believers

“Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king’s service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility.... Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah... To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king’s service. In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.” Daniel 1: 3, 6, 17-20

For three years, Daniel and his friends studied the strange new culture of the place they found themselves, learning the language and literature. At the end of their time of study, with wisdom and understanding from God, they found favour with King Nebuchadnezzar. It was God who placed them to bring His solutions to the challenges of a strange culture. So too as we read on Monday, workers have been strategically placed to bring God’s solutions at this time of crisis.

But as in other countries we have prayed for recently, some field workers have stayed in their host country, others returned home and some were unable to re-enter Russia when the coronavirus pandemic struck. Those that have remained have generally faced health and some visa problems, as well as challenges to their businesses. Those with businesses in the tourist industry have been particularly hard hit. As the pandemic continues, they are exploring new possibilities to give greater access to the unreached people groups to whom they are trying to bring the good news.

- Pray for workers who are experiencing difficulties on many fronts - with their business, visas and health. Many want to stay to continue their work among the many UPGs. Let’s ask for God’s protection and provision for them and those they seek to reach with the good news of God’s kingdom.
- Pray for all workers to understand the ‘strange’ culture they find themselves in and ask God to give them favour, discernment and courage among local leaders and people of influence.
- Online prayer groups have sprung up. Prayer is a key tool in the mission to reach Muslim people groups. Let’s pray for these groups to multiply, flourish and impact every unreached people group in the region. Let’s pray for God’s kingdom to come in the Caucasus!

Source of some content: Lectio365 October 29th 2020

Thursday 3rd December

Karachai – an unreached people group

One of the unreached Muslim people groups we will be praying for today is the Karachai.

During WW2, they were accused of supporting the Nazis and deported en masse from their Caucasus homeland to remote parts of Central Asia. Despite 35% of their population dying during the forced relocation, many Karachai have returned to their homeland and have begun repopulating their home area in the Russian province of Karachai-Cherkessia.

Now numbering approximately 220,000, the Karachai of the Russian North Caucasus have preserved much of their heritage due to their Islamic cultural identity and their clan-organised communities, called Tukhum. Fiercely loyal within their Tukhum, Karachai have maintained strong family and cultural traditions best observed in weddings, funerals and over-the-top hospitality toward guests. Karachai culture on the one hand is devoted to 'duty', but on the other hand, is plagued by cycles of vengeance and corruption. Trust between Karachai people, even believers, is very low. As a result, believers can be reluctant to meet. Praise God there are reports of a few believers meeting together to read and study the Bible.

At present there are few known Karachai followers of Jesus and only one known evangelical church. The New Testament & Psalms in the Karachai language were completed in the 1990s although translation work on the remaining books of the Bible continues.

- Pray for ways to break down this basic lack of trust so that the Karachai body of Christ can stand united.
- Pray for ongoing translation work, particularly for new social media projects.
- Pray for successful local church-planting initiatives into Karachai villages.

Source of some content: https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12521/RS

Friday 4th December

A Man of Peace Opens the Door for the Gospel

In a remote, unstable area of the Caucasus live a Muslim people group whom we will call the



Khalysh. It is hard to get visas in their country and outsiders can't travel freely. For decades, this has hindered efforts to reach them with the gospel. But in recent years, Khalysh families have migrated to a village just across the border, in a country where Frontiers has a long-term team. Jack, who helps coordinate Frontiers' strategy in the Caucasus, saw this as the opportunity he'd been waiting for to bring them the good news.

On a drizzly morning, Jack travelled toward the border to find the village. Joining him were a Frontiers team member named Kara and a local evangelist called Lutfi. As they drove, they prayed for God to lead them to a person of peace—someone to welcome them as messengers of the gospel.

Upon arriving, Lutfi approached a man on the street and said, "We'd like to learn about your town. Can you tell us who is the most respected person here?" The man pointed them to the home of a village elder called Ismail.

He invited them into his home and they shared tea around the kitchen table as Ismail introduced them to the ways of the Khalysh, a proud and religious people who are resistant to change and generally suspicious of outsiders. But Ismail saw how global uncertainties were threatening his people's traditions. And he knew that survival requires being open to the outside world.

When Jack asked how they could help the Khalysh, Ismail responded, "Come and sit with us. Send us men and women who show they care about us—people like you who will learn our culture, even our language." Jack and Kara are now recruiting those with a heart to go to the Khalysh, learn from them, and introduce them to Jesus Christ. The first Frontiers team has already formed and is preparing to move to Ismail's village.

- Praise God for this open door to reach the Khalysh.
- Pray for new teams of workers that will bring the gospel message to the Khalysh and the dozens of other unreached groups in the region.
- Ask the Lord to equip workers to share Christ in ways that reach Khalysh hearts.
- Pray that Frontiers workers around the world will meet people of peace like Ismail.

Saturday 5th December

Ingush Pop: Approximately 430,000

The Ingush are another unreached people group. They are one of the most isolated groups in the North Caucasus, partly due to their location and partly due to the recent history of conflict in the region, sandwiched as they are between North Ossetia and Chechnya.



For them life is very hard. During WW2, just as with the Karachai people, they were accused of supporting the Nazis and deported en masse to Kazakhstan and Siberia, losing an estimated two-thirds of their population along the way. After years in exile they were allowed to return home in 1958, only to find their land had been settled by others and part of their region had been

transferred to North Ossetia, on the northern borders of Georgia in Southwestern Russia.

They faced considerable opposition and animosity from the Ossetians, which came to a head in late October 1992, when a violent conflict forced tens of thousands of Ingush people from their homes again. Many now live scattered in various towns and villages, including the war-torn city of Grozny, the capital city of Chechnya.

In spite of their life of continual hardship, the Ingush people still have a rich history of art, music, dancing, wood carving and storytelling. A storyteller in Proverbs who lived about 3,000 years ago

said, "Hope deferred makes the heart grow sick, but when the desire comes, it is a tree of life." (Prov 13:12). More workers are needed to go to this people group to tell them of the great hope they have in Jesus Christ. Most Muslim people such as the Ingush have very little opportunity to see and experience the self-sacrificing love of Christ's followers. There are a few believers among the Ingush, but they are scattered.

- Pray for the Ingush people to soon find hope in Christ. Ask God to raise up a community of believers to share the hope they have with their own people.
- Pray for more of Christ's ambassadors to go to this people group and bring His audacious love to them.
- Let's thank God for the books of the Bible that have been translated into the Ingush language. Pray that a complete Bible translation will be available soon.