

Monday 28th January

Kyrgyzstan Pop: 6.2 million Muslim: 75%

Kyrgyzstan was a republic of the former Soviet Union until it gained independence in 1991. It is the only parliamentary republic in the region. This mountainous country (the highest peak is 7,439 m. or 24,406 ft. high) is home to approximately 6.2 million people, of whom 75% are Sunni Muslims. The practice of Islam was quite superficial under Soviet rule but has steadily strengthened since independence.



Owing to the difficult economic situation in the country, many people have been forced to earn money abroad, often under very difficult circumstances. Children left behind are often looked after by grandparents or other relatives; some are even sent to orphanages so their parents can go to work. Though their everyday needs are provided for, many children grow up with the feeling of being abandoned and unloved because of separation from their families.

Mothers of sons play a very large role in Kyrgyz family structure, as they control everything. Daughters-in-law are often treated like slaves. If they don't become pregnant during the first two years of marriage, the husband is often forced by his mother to dismiss his wife and marry another woman.

In addition, bride kidnapping is still very common, particularly in rural areas. Young women might be kidnapped and forced to marry a stranger. Many Kyrgyz wives in desperate situations believe that suicide is their only way out.

As a primarily Muslim nation, Kyrgyzstan's cultural identity is associated with its Islamic faith. Though the church in Kyrgyzstan was once primarily composed of expatriates, today Kyrgyz believers make up a significant proportion. The first Kyrgyz house groups and churches were planted in the 1990's and began teaching Christian principles for family life and of love and service to one another. However, it is very difficult for believers to profess their faith in Christ within traditionally close family structures - they often face hostility and are ostracised by their family or friends.

But, praise God, the church is growing and maturing in this nation, as well as the number of local believers.

- Let's cry out for women and children who feel abandoned and unloved, that they will know the One who loves them and cherishes them and whose love endures forever.
- Pray for the economic situation to improve so that families don't have to choose between living together and providing financially.
- Pray for mothers of sons to use their influence to encourage their sons to build loving marriages and do what is best for their daughters-in-law.
- Let's pray for Christian families to challenge cultural expectations and demonstrate family relationships characterised by love and serving one another.

Source of most material: <https://www.pray30days.org/2017/pray-for-kyrgyzstan/>

Tuesday 29th January

Hope for the homeless

“For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’” Deuteronomy 15:11

Watch a moving Prayercast video of Kyrgyzstan [here](#).

Kyrgyzstan is the second poorest country in Central Asia. Many rural citizens have moved to Kyrgyzstan's cities in search of better economic opportunities, which has created a growing population of slum-dwellers. High rates of alcoholism, drug trafficking, gambling and prostitution have only magnified the nation's suffering.

Global Connections published the following story:

“Not even the dogs will follow you!” said people in Hamid's Kyrgyzstani village when he announced his intention to start an outreach organisation. The villagers remembered how Hamid used to be; alone, homeless and a hopeless alcoholic. However, Hamid's own experiences of being on the brink of complete self-destruction and then being brought back by God's love, helped him to persevere.”

Today he runs an organisation which rehabilitates homeless adults and children, teaching them skills to earn an income, caring for them and enabling them to lead renewed lives.

- Pray for Hamid's organisation and others like it across this country and Central Asia. The communities they're helping seldom make it into our news, but their needs are many and complex.
- Let's pray for those caught up in a cycle of addiction and poverty, to find the Saviour who can set them free.
“He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free.” Ps 146:7

Source: <https://www.globalconnections.org.uk/prayer/central-asia/kyrgyzstan>

Wednesday 30th January

Kyrgyz people

Pop: 4.2 million

Muslim: 97%

Kyrgyzstan is home to more than eighty different ethnic groups. According to the Joshua Project, the



Kyrgyz are the largest unreached people group in Kyrgyzstan. Their name means 'the descendants of forty maidens.' The Kyrgyzstan flag has forty sun rays to represent the Kyrgyz heritage.

During its 72 years under Soviet rule, the Kyrgyz population grew to four times its original size. Hundreds of towns and villages were built

as many abandoned their traditional nomadic lifestyles. Nevertheless, the majority of the population is still rural. More than any other Central Asian people, the Kyrgyz have clung to their traditional way of life as nomadic cattle breeders. They have also maintained their tribal organisation. Today, the Kyrgyz live in one of the highest plateaus of the world.

Since the land is generally unsuitable for farming, many of the rural Kyrgyz follow their herds from pasture to pasture. They depend entirely on their animals for survival. Fortunately, they have particularly hardy and adaptable breeds of sheep, goats, yaks, horses and camels. The animals are used for both food and exchange. They also provide the only means of transportation.

The nomads travel as extended family units and live in portable felt tents, or yurts. The summers are short on the plateau and there are only about 60 days in which the ground is not covered in snow. During this season, the families tend to camp close together. However, during the winter months, families live scattered away from each other so that they might best utilise the scarce grassland.

The Kyrgyz women enjoy more freedoms than most other Central Asian women. For example, they are not required to wear veils. They are allowed to talk to men and they may freely ride about on the grasslands. They work hard and their position in the household is considered important and respected.

Women are held in high esteem once they are married. However, bride stealing is still in practice in the region. A young man may abduct a single woman off the streets and take her home. Once she has spent one night there, she is presumed to have lost her maidenhood and therefore is unwanted by other men in society. She becomes a 'kelin' or a new bride for the first year and she is unable to even speak the name of her father-in-law. She is a live-in servant and expected to get pregnant within the first year. Once she has borne children, she moves up in status.

The men devote themselves almost entirely to caring for the animals. They dress in baggy leather trousers and coarse shirts. On important occasions, the wealthier men may wear tall steeple-crowned hats made of felt or velvet and embroidered with gold. Their favourite clothing includes their belts, saddles and bridles, which are sometimes covered with gold and precious stones.

The Kyrgyz were first introduced to Islam during the seventeenth century. Within two hundred years, the majority had been completely converted to Islam. The present wave of Islamisation in Kyrgyzstan is one of the most intense that the country has ever experienced. People who were only Muslim by name are now learning many of the more intricate practices, creeds and doctrines. The country has 2,600 mosques, most of them, 68%, are situated in the country's more rural and devout south.

A Kyrgyz who becomes a Christian is seen as betraying his identity and family unity. Recently Kyrgyz Christians have faced opposition from Muslims, but with a new twist. Their new strategy is not to persecute Christians, but win them back to Islam through kindness, compassion, sympathy and shame.

- Let's ask God to anoint the gospel as it is broadcast via radio to the Kyrgyz and to open their eyes and ears to hear and receive the Word.
- Let's pray for Kyrgyz Muslim-background believers to stand strong in their faith and to find fellowship and encouragement with other believers.

- Ask the Lord to raise up strong local churches among the Kyrgyz population, who proclaim the gospel message clearly and boldly and reach out in practical loving ways to the local communities.

Sources of material: <http://en.etnopedia.org/wiki/index.php?title=Kyrgyz>
https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/12933/KG

Thursday 31st January

Islamisation in Kyrgyzstan

Yesterday we read how a wave of Islamisation is sweeping the country. According to religious scholars and analysts there, a deep understanding of Islam is key to preventing the radicalisation of Kyrgyz citizens. On Monday we read how the practice of Islam was quite superficial under Soviet rule. Those who have a superficial familiarity with Islam are more prone to radicalisation. Those who have a deep knowledge of Islam are more likely to resist negative radical influences.

Many in this country consider themselves Muslim; they perform all Muslim rituals, pray five times a day, but do not necessarily understand Sharia law and its expectations. They are therefore more susceptible to radicalisation.

American researcher David Montgomery, author of a book on Islam in Kyrgyzstan, said "More variety has appeared in terms of how Islam is practiced and many Muslim movements have sprung up in Kyrgyzstan."

A resident of the capital city of Bishkek noted a growing number of Muslims there, so many that the city's Central Mosque is overflowing during the Friday sermon and worshippers pray on the street outside.

"I consider myself a Muslim. Sometimes I go to the mosque, but I am not religious at all; I drink alcohol and smoke," he said.

"It is very good that we have noticeable growth in the number of Muslims, and the majority of young people are heading down the right path," said Bishkek-based entrepreneur Malashev, who has practiced Islam seriously for 10 years. "However, we need to protect them from extremist ideas by providing them with the correct knowledge," Malashev said. "The 'Islamic State' (IS) and other 'jihadists' do not represent Islam, don't even pray correctly and the radicals don't know the basic principles of Islam."

There is effective and ongoing work in combatting extremism and a focus in particular on young people who are vulnerable. Children from dysfunctional and single parent families are especially at risk. We know from what we read on Monday, that many children find themselves in such circumstances.

New laws are being introduced in an effort to protect them. The Director of the State Commission for Religious Affairs (GKDR) said it had received reports from parents and religious organisations complaining that strangers were taking their children from the streets and spreading religious propaganda. He said that not only parents, but also the state had to intervene.

- Let's cry out for the young generation in this country, so many lost and vulnerable, that they may come to know and accept the One who loves them unconditionally and extravagantly.
- Let's pray that a wave of revival will sweep across Kyrgyzstan.
- Let's ask for wisdom and salvation for all those in leadership positions.

Source: http://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2017/12/04/feature-02
http://central.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2018/12/14/feature-01

Friday 1st February

The importance of radio in broadcasting the gospel in Central Asia

In December last year, Mission Network News reported on the crucial importance of radio in reaching the population of Central Asia with the gospel message.

Currently, only about 15% of people in Central Asia have access to the internet. Many depend on the radio as a source of information. A broadcaster called Trans World Radio (TWR) used to broadcast the Bible on a government-owned transmitter in this region, but this transmitter was closed down at the beginning of 2017, meaning TWR's broadcasts in Central Asia were greatly reduced.

Today, TWR has an opportunity to install a new and more powerful transmitter as a replacement. Called the Silk Road Transmitter, it is powerful enough to reach Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian countries and even beyond into Northwest China. It has the potential to bring the truth of Jesus to around 60 million lives.

TWR works with hundreds of ministries around the world to provide material in the local languages of the people hearing their broadcasts and to provide information relevant to different age groups.

This 3-minute video clip called Waves of Hope to Central Asia, explains the story in more detail:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1cPKmjXYMI>

Twenty-eight years ago, Central Asia didn't have a local church. Today hundreds of thousands of people are believers! Radio has had an important part to play, as it has not only broadcast the Bible to Muslims who have had no contact with workers or Muslim Background Believers (MBBs), but encouraged new believers in their faith.

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to open the hearts and minds of Muslims listening to TWR's broadcasts.
- We thank God for the provision of radio, its broadcasters and all those who work to produce content for the programmes. Let's ask for God's protection, anointing and leading in all they do.
- Finally, pray for God's favour in raising much-needed funds to launch and run the Silk Road Transmitter.

Source of material: <https://www.mnnonline.org/news/twr-to-install-new-transmitter-in-central-asia/>

Saturday 2nd February

A Courageous Man – a story from a worker in Central Asia

Na'im, a Muslim-background man, loves reading God's Word.

In Hebrews 4:12, we read that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."



Scripture radically changes us. And as I walk with Na'im, a new follower of Jesus, I am witnessing how beautifully God's Word transforms our hearts, souls, and spirits, just as it's transforming Na'im's.

Every day, Na'im shares how he's impressed by the truth he's reading. When we meet together, he talks about how God has shown him something new in scripture. He expresses how he's overwhelmed by Christ's grace and love and how he can't wait to read more the next day.

The beauty of the gospel simply amazes him. And everyone needs to hear this truth he insists, even if telling them puts him at risk.

But he's not afraid.

"Il-hamdulillah, praise God," Na'im recently said. "Everything is from God. The courage I had to speak in front of all the men in my neighbourhood and tell them about Jesus, that's all from God."

After reading the first chapter of Joshua, in which the Lord urges Joshua to be strong and courageous, Na'im prayed for God to give him strength and courage to share the gospel in his neighbourhood.

"Some followers of Jesus may not live out their faith because they're afraid of being harmed," he said. "But, me? Brother, nobody can shut me up. Nobody."

- Praise God for filling Na'im's spirit with strength and courage and for transforming him through the living and active Word which is "sweeter than honey" (Psalm 119:103). Let's pray for protection for Na'im and other Muslim-background believers, as they boldly share their faith within their community.
- Let's pray for many other Muslims living in this region to have a deep hunger for the Word of God and a desire to know Him more.
- We thank God for the faithful witness of our gospel workers. Let's ask God to bless and encourage them and add to their numbers.