

The Persecuted Church

Interserve Canada
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A Letter from Richard Piet
National Director

When I was a young teen I was impacted by Richard Wurmbrand's books — particularly *Tortured for Christ*. Wurmbrand was imprisoned and tortured because he shared his faith with others. After reading Wurmbrand's testimonial, God laid on my heart the Persecuted Church. I would remember to pray for those that suffered for Jesus. I pondered their plight and was so amazed at their faith.

Recently, what God had laid on my heart all those years ago came back afresh and I was overwhelmed. One of our overseas workers asked me to join him in his ministry that works to equip, educate and encourage the leaders of the Persecuted Church in North Africa. I was honored to attend one of his week-long meetings where church leaders from all over North Africa came together for biblical teaching, fellowship, encouragement and prayer for their efforts to win people to Christ.

What I saw at the meeting were humble and gentle leaders who have suffered greatly for the sake of Jesus. They have been stoned, imprisoned and persecuted. Yet all of them have a heart for the unreached and do not waver from the mission of the Church. As one leader said, "with joy we endure the suffering...if we keep our focus on Jesus and His example we can endure suffering and [He will] give us joy. He will give us encouragement and hope on those things eternal. The suffering we are going through, it will end, but the blessings are coming." They courageously risk their lives for the sake of the Gospel.

I am so impressed that these leaders and their churches have not retreated into themselves. Outreach is what they are all about and what they continue to focus on. Their faith has been purified by persecution. They know Jesus deeply and desire that all may know Him.

As Canadians we enjoy great freedom and blessing. With these privileges come some very unique, God-given responsibilities. Armed with a Canadian passport and a profession we are welcomed in the Arab World and Asia. I believe it is incumbent upon us to seize this unique opportunity to proclaim the Gospel so all people can hear about Jesus. Now more than ever we need to bring hope and life to those who do not know Jesus, whether that be going to these nations or supporting others as they head into ministry.

The Persecuted Church in North Africa



North Africa is made up of 8 countries: Libya, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Algeria, Western Sahara, Morocco, and Tunisia.



Currently, over 100 million Christians are being persecuted worldwide, with the vast majority in Asia and North Africa.

CHRISTIANITY IS STILL, BY FAR, THE MOST PERSECUTED DEMOGRAPHIC ON EARTH.

Governments and other forces in countries in the Middle East and North Africa are systematically targeting Christians: "imprisoning, punishing and in some cases murdering people who choose to express, privately or publicly, their Christian faith."



PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS OFTEN FEEL ISOLATED AND ALONE SINCE THEY ARE UNABLE TO FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.

All of the North African countries Interserve works in are listed in the top 35 countries where Christians face the most persecution.

Each month, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed. Many of which are in North Africa.



Still, despite ruthless anti-Christian persecution, which has plagued the world since the time of Christ and the Romans, Christianity remains the most widespread faith in the world.

Interserve's Work in North Africa

In peace and in turmoil, Interserve has had a presence in North Africa. Interserve is committed to making disciples of Jesus with people in this part of the world. Because of their belief in Christ, many face persecution, imprisonment and torture. As a result, Interserve strives to cautiously disciple, teach and encourage young converts and church leaders in the faith and we will continue to stand with the Persecuted Church through whatever trials are ahead.

After the meeting I attended in November, one church leader offered his thanks to *Steven, one of our Partners, saying, "thank you, *Steven! I appreciate all you did to pull this together. It was [an] amazing blessing being able to reconnect with the *North African brothers and meet new friends who are trying to support the work...I look forward to more of these in the future."

Interserve's Partners in North Africa are involved in medical work, as well as community health and development. Our ministry is wholistic and integrated, involving word, action, personal life and professional skills. Through this model of ministry our Partners have made important contributions to the people they serve and they will continue to be involved in building up the Church in that part of the world.

*Name and Country have been changed to protect the church leaders who attended the meetings.



Has God placed North African believers on your heart?
Here are 5 ways you can serve the North African church:

- 1** Form a prayer group and receive updates on Interserve workers who are equipping and encouraging local believers in their faith. Pray for them, and invite our workers to come and share with your group.
- 2** Advocate for the North African church. Invite an overseas worker to your church to share their vision and ministry with your church family.
- 3** Go and serve. Some of you are called to this work. If you sense God's call, talk to your pastor about it and get in touch with Interserve to find out how God can use your skills to further His Kingdom in North Africa.
- 4** Give. Our work in North Africa is underfunded. We need people to partner with us financially for this crucial work. To find out more about our Partners ministries in North Africa, call (416) 499-7511 or email info@interservecanada.org
- 5** Support a local school that educates refugee children who have fled from intense conflict. These children, aged 5-7, have not been able to attend school to learn fundamental skills like reading and writing. The founding church leader has hired teachers without the necessary funds out of faith that God will provide for their needs. If you'd like to hear more about this school, call us at (416) 499-7511 or email info@interservecanada.org. Pictures below:



What's New



Congratulations to Jenna Yango on her new job!

Jenna will be leaving Interserve at the end of January to take up a role within her church. We will miss her great work ethic, and caring spirit around the office. We pray the transition from roles will be smooth and wish only the best for her.



Interserve has changed logos!



Interserve

We are very pleased to show you the new design Interserve International has created. All of Interserve's national offices around the globe will be switching to this logo over the next year. We are very excited to line up our identity, and show solidarity, internationally.



Opportunity to support work in India

One of our Partners is looking for support to continue their ministry to the biggest unreached people group of India, the Other Backward Cast (OBC's). Their hugely successful Christian based magazine, which continues to be one of the highest circulated magazines reaching the OBC population, is needing support. The magazine employs editors, writers, translators and web masters, all of which are in danger of losing their job. For this magazine to run, Interserve needs your help to continue to support our Partners in India. To find out more about this ministry, please call Interserve at (416) 499-7511 or email info@interservecanada.org



Remebering Colin Fitzhenry Blair

Colin Blair passed away on November 25, 2015 while on a teaching trip in Asia. He is survived by his wife Janette. Interserve will greatly miss Colin's passion for missions. Colin was active as a missionary and teacher of cultural anthropology from 1953 to the day he passed away. He worked extensively in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh; Afganistan, Iran, The Gulf; Hong Kong; extensive visits to the Middle East; SE Asia, NE Asia; Oceania, UK & Europe. His desire was to see young people grow in a deeper relationship with God and what He was doing in the world.

Upcoming Events

Interserve is attending Discerning Your Call!

Discerning Your Call is a free event that will bring missionary hopefuls together for an afternoon of worship, fellowship and counsel as they process God's call on their life. At this event a number of missionaries will share their story, giving you a glimpse into how the Lord called them, how they took their next steps, how they overcame their anxieties and barriers in order to step into missions. Some of them have served for a few months and others for years. University aged or recently graduated students can register for this event at: <http://missionshub.ca/call/>.

Please continue to pray that God will lead those who are searching for God's guidance as they journey towards missions.

