

EASTER PRAY WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH



Easter will be very different for us this year!

For many it will be a time of fear, uncertainty and even loss, but for thousands of Christians around the world those feelings are only too common – especially at Easter.

This Easter, we are inviting you to join with them in praying for protection, and in claiming the hope which we all have through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In this resource you will find prayer points for the persecuted church, an Easter prayer from an Open Doors partner in Sri Lanka, and written prayers for various days in Holy Week.

Easter – A time of vulnerability

Last year, in Sri Lanka, 259 people were killed,

most of them Christians, and thousands more were injured, when suicide bombers attacked three churches and three hotels. It was an horrific attack. But what happened in Sri Lanka is just the latest – and most severe – of attacks on Christians at Easter.

In 2016, bombings in Pakistan on Easter Sunday killed 75 people and injured 340. In 2017, on Palm Sunday, 45 Christians lost their lives in bomb attacks on churches in Egypt.

There are also any number of smaller, hidden attacks on believers in remote or rural areas, which often go unnoticed.

Whatever the danger, whatever the threat, our persecuted church family need our help as they dare to celebrate this year.



Open Doors partner Sunil prays for Kalviya and her family. In the bombings she lost her brother, sister-in-law, and one year old nephew. Since the attack, Open Doors has supported them with their livelihood as bakers to help them recover.

Easter – a time for hope

This Easter, like every year, we will relive the story of the passion – the joy and anticipation of Palm Sunday, the dreadful darkness of Good Friday, and the miraculous resurrection victory of Easter Sunday.

For many Christians around the world, this is their story as well. They experience the joy of finding Jesus, the darkness of suffering and persecution, but also the hope of the resurrection.

So, let us pray with our brothers and sisters at this time. And let us all take hold of the resurrection hope that we all share.

PLEASE PRAY

- For those who meet despite the danger. Pray for protection for Christians everywhere as they celebrate Easter. Whether they are able to gather in big churches or must meet online or in groups of two or three in places where Christianity is forbidden – ask that God would be their strength and their shield.
- For those who are grieving. Pray for comfort and peace for those who lost loved ones in previous attacks – especially for those in Sri Lanka, Egypt and Pakistan. May the Holy Spirit bind up their broken hearts; may they know that others are standing with them.
- For pastors. That they would have wisdom and strength and would be able to encourage and inspire those they lead. May they be effective in building up the church, and may they also have people whom they can turn to when they themselves need help.
- For Open Doors partners. Our local church partners and rapid response teams take enormous risks to bring support and love to those in danger. This dangerous work is even more difficult because of the Covid-19

pandemic. So please pray for courage and protection, for guidance for those stepping up online support for isolated believers, and for God to miraculously open doors so that they can help those in need.

An Easter Prayer From Pastor Sunil

Pastor Sunil* is an Open Doors partner in Sri Lanka. He has been part of a team supporting the victims of the Easter attacks over the past 12 months.

Thank You, Lord, for giving us a day to celebrate Your victory

Thank You, Lord, for helping us to understand that our life doesn't end here, but that we have a great hope with You.

Father, I pray for those who cannot celebrate this Easter because they lost their beloved family members

Lord I am praying that they will be encouraged by knowing that one day they will see them because of our hope in Easter

Lord, bless all those people who cannot celebrate this Easter as we celebrate.

Comfort them and remind them of the hope we have in You, father.

I also thank You Lord for Your salvation,

Thank You, Lord, for Your victory,

Thank You, Lord, for the hope You have given us,

Thank You, Lord, for helping us to testify to the world that the empty tomb has given us the hope that one day we will see You face to face.

We pray in the mighty name of Jesus.

Amen.

*Name changed for security reasons

PRAYERS FOR HOLY WEEK

A prayer for Palm Sunday

If you can, go into your garden and find a leaf, and some stones. They can serve as a reminder of the palm leaves waved by the crowd, and Jesus' statement that if the crowds were silent, then the very stones would shout out in praise.

Lord Jesus,

Today, where they can, Christians will be gathering for services and processions, making public statements of their faith.

We remember the joy of that day when You rode into Jerusalem. Please give courage and joy to all those in countries where Christians are marginalised or attacked. Despite the danger, may they still dare to proclaim today that You are Messiah, Christ, the Son of the living God.

And for those who cannot openly speak the truth about You – may the stones cry out, may their lives shout as loud as any crowd, that You are the one who saves.

Protect Your family, Lord, we pray.

Amen

A prayer for Maundy Thursday

Maundy Thursday is a name which comes from the Latin word 'mandatum', which means commandment. It's a reminder of the command which Jesus gave to His disciples at the last supper, to love one another (John 13:34). You might like to draw a heart on a sheet of paper and write on it the names of people and countries to pray for today.

Lord Jesus,

At the supper You shared with Your friends You commanded them to love one another.

Help us to show love in action today. Give us all the opportunity, wherever we are, to metaphorically wash the feet of others – to show them what sacrificial love looks like.

And on this day – the day of Your betrayal and arrest – we think specifically of those who have been arrested for their faith. Be with them in their fear and their isolation. Give them a deep and abiding sense of abiding with You.

May they, too, be able to show love to others, wherever they are.

Protect Your family, Lord, we pray.

Amen

A prayer for Good Friday

When you pray, perhaps you could light a candle as a symbol of the church. In many places it is a fragile, flickering flame. But it is still a light to the world. And no power on earth will be able to extinguish it. Good Friday is 'God's Friday' – that's where the name comes from. And God is still at work, and still in charge.

Lord Jesus,

As we think about Your death at the hands of Your enemies, we ask that You will be with all those who run the risk of experiencing violence in Your name.

Protect them from the crowds who insult and mock, from the mobs who beat and burn, and from the soldiers who want to execute them.

For those who feel afraid, or even forsaken, reassure them with Your presence.

And for those who suffer for Your name's sake, may they know the power of Your Holy Spirit, so that they too may pray, 'Father forgive'.

Protect Your family, Lord, we pray.

Amen

A prayer for Holy Saturday

Holy Saturday – in some traditions known as the Great Sabbath – is a day associated with a sense of emptiness. Historically some traditions have marked it with fasting and silence. You might like to try this as a way to help us think about Christians who are waiting, hopefully, even desperately, for the Lord.

Lord Jesus,

Sometimes, there is nothing; nothing but the longing and the waiting.

We pray today for all those who are waiting on You. For the parents of abducted Christian girls, who wait, patiently for news. For those languishing in jails or under house arrest, waiting for justice. For the families of the missing, whose loved ones have simply been taken away.

Oh, Lord, make haste to save. Comfort them with the knowledge that You have the victory.

In You, oh Lord, is all our hope. Save us, oh Saviour of the world.

Protect Your family, Lord, we pray.

Amen

A prayer for Easter Sunday

This is the greatest day in the church calendar: The day of resurrection. It's a day of celebration, so celebrate with your family today. If you can, bring fresh flowers into your house. Look around you and see how many signs of spring you can see. Give thanks for new life!

Lord Jesus,

We thank You that no tomb could hold You, and that no stone is ever too heavy for Your power to roll away. May Your resurrection power fill Your church this Easter.

We pray for all those around the world who are celebrating Your resurrection today. Many of Your family, Lord, are celebrating in places and societies who wish them dead. Keep them safe, Lord, we pray.

May Your life be seen today in the courage, the joy and the faith of Your followers, so that those who do not know You may see that only You are the life and the light of the world.

Protect Your family, Lord, we pray.

Amen

SUPPORT THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Around the world, millions of persecuted Christians are in need of support, now more than ever.

Visit our website at opendoorsuk.org to give today or call our Inspire Team on **01993 460015**.

Thank you.



Pakistan, Easter 2016. This cross is hung in the church that was bombed. An entire area of over an acre was riddled with damage from bullets and shrapnel. Yet the cross remained untouched. "This is where we need to be in times of crises. This is where the fountain of saving grace springs," says an Open Doors partner in Pakistan.