

At the same time, six Christians are under police custody under allegations of evangelizing. Two of them were arrested while singing worship songs on the street and allegedly proclaiming Christ, while four were arrested at their homes.

Evangelizing is prohibited under Nepal's new constitution, passed in September 2015, as it was under the previous constitution. While the new constitution establishes Nepal as a secular and democratic republic, its definition of *secular* appears to protect Hinduism and allow others to worship only in their own faiths. Article 26 forbids anyone to "convert a person of one religion to another religion, or disturb the religion of other people."

## Pope Fears "Crisis of Vocations" in Europe (5)

Recently, Pope Francis voiced alarm at the "hemorrhaging" of nuns and priests in Italy and throughout Europe.

Pope Francis told Italy's bishops he was concerned about the "crisis of vocations" in a region of the world that once was one of the biggest sources of Catholic missionaries. He said Italy and Europe were entering a period of "vocational sterility" to which he wasn't sure a solution existed.

"How many seminaries, churches, monasteries and convents will be closed in the next few years?" he asked. "God only knows."

According to Vatican statistics, the decrease has been greatest in Europe, where there were 2,502 fewer priests between 2014 and 2015. During the same

period, the number of baptized Catholics rose globally from 1.27 billion to nearly 1.29 billion, meaning the ratio of Catholics to the priests available to minister to them is growing.

## Church of Scotland Backs Same-Sex Marriage (5)

Church of Scotland leaders who support the biblical definition of marriage are concerned about legal threats as the church moves toward supporting same-sex marriage.

The church's general assembly voted 345-170 in favor of a motion instructing a committee to create legislation for the church to host homosexual unions. Although "safeguards" will be considered, some in the church said they are nervous about being sued if they—or others—refuse to take part.

After the general assembly's vote, the Church of Scotland's Legal Questions Committee will now begin preparing legislation and report back in 2020.

In May of 2017, the church officially backed same-sex unions after debating a report that acknowledged the Bible condemns same-sex acts, but claimed Scripture was framed by cultural context.

*To check out books and other church resources, please visit [www.Tyndale.com](http://www.Tyndale.com).*

## significant news for christians

Some news that's encouraging—some disturbing. Read with discernment. Watch and pray.

# THE Church Around the WORLD

September 2018



## Country in Focus: Iceland (1)

Iceland, an island nation, spans 40,000 square miles of mountains and volcanic landscapes in the North Atlantic. Income from traditional fishing is being replaced by tourism and hydroelectric plants. The fast-growing financial services sector triggered a financial crisis and banking collapse in 2008-2009, leading to the demise of one government. Traditional Icelandic life is under threat from changes in the economy and the growing dispute between conservationists wanting to preserve the environment and industrialists wanting to make use of the country's natural resources. The Lutheran Church is recognized as the state church, but Iceland has religious freedom, and evangelical believers are growing in number.

Prayer concerns:

- The majority of Icelanders are Christian, but only nominally so—biblical Christianity and a lifestyle of following Christ are alien concepts to most citizens;
- The Lutheran Church is suffering the same challenges as much of Europe—declining and aging congregations, low attendance, and a lack of spiritual vitality;
- The small number of foreign immigrants occasionally come into conflict with Iceland's traditionally guarded society.

## Historic Cross Removed (2)

A large white cross that stood on state property in Michigan for nearly 70 years has been removed after the Michigan Association of Civil Rights filed a complaint.

The cross had stood on Sackrider Hill in the Waterloo Recreation Area in Jackson County since 1950. It is owned by the Grass Lake Ministerial Association, which will help remove it to a permanent location.

John Pepin, deputy public information

officer for Michigan's Department of Natural Resources, explained, "Basically, there was a cross that we didn't own that was on land that we did own. We worked with the people that owned the cross and they voted to support removing it to a permanent location."

While the Michigan Association of Civil Rights spearheaded the process to remove the cross from state land, other groups were in favor of allowing it to stay.

**But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!**

MATTHEW 5:44

## Report: UN Weak on Religious Freedom

The United Nations (UN) cannot strengthen, promote, and protect human rights if it does not prioritize religious freedom, a report published by the Washington-based human rights alliance ADF International has argued.

The report claims that “some UN entities have highlighted the problems with anti-conversion laws, but other (UN) entities have failed to condemn them.” That particular failure, the report says, is “emblematic of the UN’s overall failure to protect religious freedom.”

ADF, an international alliance of human-rights groups with a focus on religious freedom, also accused the UN of turning a blind eye to laws that “usually give license” to extremists to persecute minority religious groups.

In South and Southeast Asia, an increase in nationalism was one of the main contributors to the growing popularity of

anti-conversion laws, according to ADF. Nationalist forces regard conversion from the predominant religion—Islam in Pakistan, and Hinduism in India, for example—as a threat to national unity and security. Anti-conversion laws have been passed in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. Nepal and Pakistan are members of the UN’s Human Rights Council. India, Nepal, Myanmar, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan also appear on the Open Doors 2018 World Watch List of the 50 countries where it is most difficult to live as a Christian.

## Christian Refuses to Dance to “Bisexual Anthem” (2)

A Christian athlete is being applauded for standing up for her beliefs and refusing to dance to a “risqué” song on ABC’s *Dancing with the Stars*.

Professional softball player Jennie Finch-Daigle told the show’s producer and her



partner that she couldn’t dance to Janelle Monáe’s song “Make Me Feel,” which is filled with suggestive lyrics and touches on bisexuality. Some have called the song a “bisexual anthem.”

“I’m not really sure about the song,” she told dance partner Keo Motsepe during a rehearsal broadcast. “It’s just not me.”

Viewers then heard a phone call between Finch-Daigle and the producer in which she said, “I’m struggling with my song choice. It’s a little too risqué. I’m just not feeling comfortable with it. I can’t go through with it.”

Finch-Daigle later told reporters, “I want to glorify God out there, and that just wasn’t a great choice for me to do that.”

## Myanmar: 7,000 Kachin Displaced (3)

Almost 7,000 people belonging to the largely Christian minority group in Kachin, northern Myanmar, have fled their houses since fighting between the army and a rebel group flared up last spring. Thousands of lives have been lost and at least 120,000 people have been displaced in the decades-long conflict between Myanmar’s army and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) since the military seized control of the country in 1962.

According to a source for World Watch Monitor, “Civilians in the warzone are

threatened to leave their house or be killed; many houses are burnt down by the government soldiers.”

Majority Buddhist Myanmar is made up of eight major and eight minor ethnic groups, each of which hoped for autonomy after the nation became independent 70 years ago, but some of the world’s longest-running civil wars still continue there.

Myanmar has been called “a deeply fractured nation on a political and especially ethnic level.” The conflict zones along the country’s borders are where most of Myanmar’s Christians live, including the Kachin and Karen ethnic minorities, who have faced years of government oppression.

Christian charity Open Doors International estimates there are more than 4 million Christians in Myanmar, constituting 8 percent of the total population. Most of them live in Kachin, where 85 percent are estimated to be Christians, and in northern Shan state.

## Attacks on Churches in Nepal (4)

Christians in Nepal are alarmed after a recent series of arson and bomb attacks on four church buildings, and church leaders suspect authorities are lax in investigating. The attacks, suspected to be the work of Hindu extremists, caused extensive property damage but no casualties.



## This month you can... Take Billy Graham’s Last Wishes to Heart

The last will and testament of famous evangelist Billy Graham, who died in February at the age of 99, has been released to the public. In it, Graham calls his wife, Ruth, the “greatest Christian” he ever knew and urges his family to uphold Jesus Christ no matter the cost.

The document begins with Graham describing in his own words how he found “joy and peace” in believing in God since he was a teenager. He went on to

say, “I ask my children and grandchildren to maintain and defend at all hazards at any cost of personal sacrifice the blessed doctrine of complete Atonement for sin through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ once offered, and through that alone. I urge all of you to walk with the Lord in a life of separation from the world and to keep eternal values in view.”

The evangelist urged his family to read the Bible on a daily basis and to trust in

Jesus Christ as the means to salvation.

Graham was known for seeking to live a simple and humble life despite the worldwide success of his ministry, an attitude that was reflected on his graveyard marker: *Billy Graham, Preacher of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, John 14:6*—a verse that reads, “Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.’”