

PRAYING FOR THE WORLD

WEEK 23, JUNE 7-13

The Orthodox Church



Various major challenges confront the global Orthodox Church.

The need for renewal: after a long history of rigid traditionalism, over the last decades an increasing number of Orthodox theologians and priests have been advocating for internal renewal on various levels (worship, Scriptural engagement, missional activity etc). Renewal would address both nominalism and the rise of post-Christian worldviews in Orthodox countries. Some slow but encouraging steps have started to be taken place in some areas; many more remain. A renewed Orthodox Church could be the most powerful influence among the world's 260 million Orthodox.

Nationalism and internal division. Ancient divisions between Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches have been addressed significantly on paper; less so in reality. Furthermore, the centuries-old tensions and disunity between the Constantinople and Moscow Patriarchates have escalated during the last years.

Openness towards other denominations. Evangelical-Orthodox relationships have often been difficult, due to fears of proselytism,

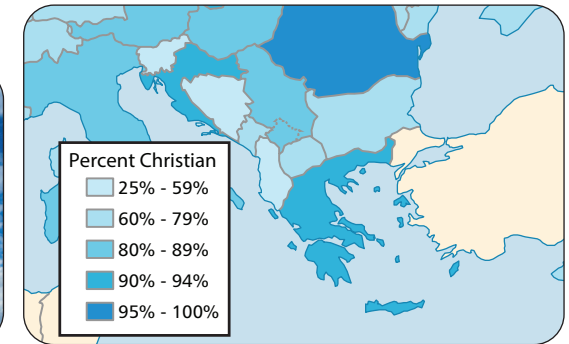
but also because of the real differences in theology, especially on the understanding of justification by faith alone. The Panorthodox Council of 2016 recognized officially for the first time Protestants as fellow Christians (and not heretics). Yet in many areas tensions still remain and much grace is needed for evangelicals experiencing opposition from Orthodox to their outreach. In others, evangelicals have not always shown sensitivity or respect to the Orthodox they have sought to reach.

Let us pray for:

- Renewal in the Orthodox Church, and for protection and illumination for Orthodox leaders seeking to strengthen and renew their churches.
- Improvement of inter-Orthodox as well as Orthodox-Evangelical relationships.
- Clarity of thought and theological sincerity, as each tradition seeks to understand the other; wisdom for agencies seeking to explore possibilities for approach and cooperation, especially in humanitarian ministries and Bible distribution.

THE NATIONS

GREECE



After a decade of dire financial crisis, recovery still seems distant, causing a widespread hopelessness among Greeks - a unique opportunity for the Church to proclaim the hope of Jesus. The refugee crisis brought thousands of refugees in Greece. Although Greek evangelicals are a tiny minority, many churches and organizations (e.g. the Evangelical Church of Greece, Helping Hands, Greek Evangelical Alliance etc.) have been vibrantly active in refugee ministries. While most Greeks self-identify as Orthodox, nominal Christianity remains the norm. Greece has an increasingly post-Christian population (which is unprecedentedly open-minded towards evangelicals). New, creative forms of outreach are being developed for sharing the gospel.

- Pray for the healing of the Greek economic and refugee crisis.
- Pray that the Church may be a beacon of hope in this time of hopelessness, and that Greeks may be open to the gospel.

THE BALKANS

This SE European region has a long history of turmoil. Most of its countries have a struggling economy, which forces thousands to emigrate, causing a 'brain drain' that further hinders recovery.

Most countries include an Orthodox majority; a significant percentage of Muslims; and a tiny minority of evangelicals. God is powerfully at work among the Romani people throughout the Balkans. Otherwise, spiritual indifference is widespread, and age-old links between religious and ethnic identity fuel religious nationalism, rather than the gospel.

The Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, Europe's deadliest conflicts since World War II, have left deep wounds and trauma. Reconciliation is a great challenge, but is also an area where the Church could have great impact.

- Pray for true reconciliation, and for God to break these religious and ethnic bondages through the power of Christ.
- Pray for the Church to be an agent of transformation (spiritual, social and economic) throughout the Balkans.

Praying for the World is a free weekly prayer guide to inspire and inform the whole church to pray for the whole world. Visit www.lausanne.org/pray to start any week. Created through the partnership of Operation World and the Lausanne Movement.