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ASKing Point

is a bi-monthly communication on behalf of ASK Network International. It is an invitation to join the network of prayer throughout the nations, ASKing and agreeing regarding key issues on God's heart. It is a tool for prayer, a place for testimony to God's faithfulness in answering, and a gift of worship to the Living God.

Unfinished Business— ASKing for the Unreached

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere — in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 (New Living)

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus declared the good news of God's kingdom, often in the least expected places, among the least likely people. In his final instructions to his disciples, Jesus passed the baton: *Now it's your turn — make sure everyone on the planet hears this good news!*

For over 2,000 years, the gospel has moved broadly across the earth through the Spirit-led efforts of countless faithful disciples. And yet, our task is not yet finished. While much progress has been made, mission strategists estimate that 42% of the world's people groups (nearly 3 billion people) still do not have adequate access to the message of Jesus and God's kingdom. A people group is an ethnic group that bears a distinct language and cultural identity. The Joshua Project* identifies 9,760 people groups in the world today. Of this total, 4,084 are identified as "unreached." Unreached people groups have little or no access to Scripture in their indigenous language, no church, and very few, if any, followers of Jesus among them. Unreached people groups are not simply uninterested in Jesus. They are people groups who haven't yet heard about him or the good news of God's kingdom in a relatable language.

Participating in God's call to reach the unreached is a priority for ASK Network, and a trademark of our DNA. It is why we include two unreached people group focuses in each ASKing Point. Why does reaching the unreached matter so much to us? Here are a few reasons:

It is our commission. In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives some final instructions to his followers saying, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations..." In Greek, the word "nations" is *ethne*, or ethnic group. God's desire for nations goes beyond geopolitical boundaries to include each distinct ethnic group on earth.

It is a key prerequisite to Christ's return and the full establishment of God's kingdom. When the disciples asked Jesus for a sign of his return, he included in his response that "the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all *ethne*, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14)

It is our identity as followers of Jesus. We are called to be salt and light on the earth (Matthew 5:13-14), ministers of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18), Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20) and a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). The message is ours to embody.

Our view of God grows as we interact with people who are different than us. God created all humans in his image (Genesis 1:26). What might we learn about God as we view him through the lens of another culture?

It is the dream of God's heart! Revelation 7:9-17 paints a beautiful picture of God's desire to be reunited with the people he created, "from every *ethne* and all tribes and people and tongues..." As ASK'ers who long to share the yearnings of God's heart, what more reason do we need to participate in this dream becoming a reality?

So how do we engage more deeply in this endeavor? ASK! ASKing unlocks shut doors and helps clear out the obstacles. *Ask God to do what only He can do:* to soften hearts and minds and cultures to receive a revelation of his kingdom (Ezekiel 11:19-20, Psalm 63:1-5). *Do whatever he asks of you:* ASK for a specific unreached people group (Psalm 2:8).* Look around your community. Is there an unreached people group in your neighborhood that is waiting to hear the good news of God's kingdom through you? ASK God to give you the language, both literally and figuratively, to share the message of his kingdom in a meaningful way (Romans 10:14-15).

Thank God for the gift of his Spirit, who empowers and equips us to finish this task. May God's kingdom come and his will be done, on earth as it is in heaven! 🌐

By Tara C.

(*see www.joshuaproject.net for more information on unreached people groups)



ASK Network News

ASK Network is growing in the nations! So we are grateful that Tara C recently joined up with Martie Hunter on the International "Development Team." Tara also works with Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship (www.pff.net), a mission mobilizing agency that helps build healthy connections between UPGs and Western Christians. She will help us ASK more effectively for Unreached People Groups (UPGs), and strengthen relational connections around the globe.

With the support of the International Directors and alongside Continental leadership, Martie & Tara will seek to pioneer the work in new areas, recognizing that it is the Lord who will lead in this endeavor. We trust Him to open doors into nations in His timing, calling those into the network and into leadership in particular, fulfilling the vision of ASK network by praying for all nations and wherever possible in all nations, embracing UPGs within that vision.

Please ASK for God's blessing as plans take shape for ASK gatherings this coming October-November in South Africa and Australia. 🌐



ASKing for the Nations



Macedonia

Unreached People Group:

Many people don't know that Mother Teresa was born in Skopje, the capital of Macedonia, a small eastern European nation landlocked by Albania, Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. It has been contested by many powers throughout history, and still endures claims by neighbouring countries. Ethnic populations are a politicised issue and include Macedonian, Bosnian and Serb within the Slavic peoples; and Albanians, Roma and Turks.

There is some tension between the Macedonian and large Albanian people groups, but the most notable political issue is Macedonia's candidacy for the EU and NATO. In both cases Greece holds veto power and blocks Macedonia from joining over its insistence on using the name 'Republic of Macedonia.' Greece resents the use of the title due to possible territorial aspirations for a Greater Macedonia, which would encompass the part of Greece also named Macedonia.


Philippi, where the gospel first entered Europe through Paul is in the geographical region of Macedonia and within the borders of today's Greece. It is the claim to this territory that lies at the heart of today's hostilities between the two nations.

It is one of the poorest regions of former Yugoslavia, and high unemployment and a low standard of living have caused a significant exodus, particularly of the young and talented.

However there are some exciting and encouraging initiatives in Macedonia. Our contacts, a Macedonian and his Croatian-Serbian wife who spent four years studying in the UK, have been working with many disparate groups of this fragmented nation, from Catholic to Protestant, Orthodox to Muslim. They reach out to them, with specialized conferences, and facilitate open discussions on a range of subjects. In addition, they have developed good relationships with the academia, the media and government, as they reach out with the gospel through the means of friendship and the love of Christ.

Religious tensions exist but the religious communities are leading the way in the area of reconciliation and dialogue. Our contacts are members of The Evangelical Church in Macedonia, which is one of the fastest growing in Europe and displays growing unity across its theological breadth.

ASK for...

- For increasing growth in the evangelical church. *But the word of God continued to spread and flourish. Acts 12:24*
- For further renewal in the Macedonian Orthodox churches. *...they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. As a result, many of them believed. Acts 17: 11-12a*
- For unity across all the churches. *My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. John 17: 20-21*
- For those in government, academia and the media to be influenced by the example of Christians who freely offer their best to the country out of their love for Christ. *John 3:1-15*
- For these efforts to bring about the flourishing of all people who live in Macedonia. 

POMAK OF MACEDONIA

Population: 2,110

Primary Religion: Islam

Language: Bulgarian

Background

The Pomaks are Slavic people who share a language and many customs with Bulgarians. Pomaks are distinguished by their non-Bulgarian names and devotion to Islam. It is believed Pomaks converted to Islam in the 1370's, probably involuntarily. Over time, they adopted some Muslim customs. The name "Pomak" means "people who have suffered." Throughout history, they have been outcasts of Bulgarian society. They are farmers and migrant workers, also known for weaving. While most Pomaks identify as Muslims, very few follow traditional Islamic practice. Many celebrate Christian feast days. The Pomak identity is confused. Numerous cults have taken advantage of this ambiguity, trying to win the hearts of the Pomak people.

ASK... that God would clarify the identity of Pomak people, revealing who He created them to be through Christ. Ask that the few Pomak followers of Jesus would have courage to share their faith with family, friends and neighbors. (Isaiah 43:1-7)

ASKing for the Nations



Unreached People Group:

GARRE OF SOMALIA

Population: 75,100

Primary Religion: Islam

Language: Garre

Background

The Garre are a sub-tribe of the Somali ethnic group. They are nomads and pastoralists, migrating seasonally with herds of camel, sheep and goats. Garre villages consist of several related families living in portable huts and, like other Somali people groups, Garre are fiercely loyal to their clan. Garre follow the traditions of Islam, including the practice of polygamy. The divorce rate among Garre is high, and children are divided by gender, with fathers taking the boys and mothers taking the girls. Today, Garre people struggle with severe drought and inadequate health care. They are an unengaged people group, lacking any kind of Christian witness.

ASK...that God would seek out and save the Garre people, encountering them in their nomadic wanderings and proving Himself as the Bread of Life and the Living Water. Ask for laborers to rise up for God's harvest among the Garre people. (John 4:7-38)



SOMALIA

Somalia is a semi-arid land in the Horn of Africa with a population of 10.2 million. The nation was formed in 1960, when Britain and Italy withdrew and granted independence. Peace was short-lived. In 1969, Siad Barre headed a coup that established dictatorial rule characterized by imprisonment and torture of opponents. Barre's regime collapsed in 1991. That May, northern clans declared an independent Republic of Somaliland. This republic is not recognized by any government, but remains stable today. Since 1991, life in southern Somalia has been marked by poverty, famine and violence. Somalia was twenty years without a government. Efforts to establish stability, led by the UN (with help from Ethiopia, Kenya and the United States) had tenuous results. After years of effort, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud was elected in September 2012. Peace and stability remain elusive to this day.

Most Somali's practice Islam. A very small percentage are Christians who face intense persecution. Somalia is ranked the second worst nation in the world for Christian persecution, following North Korea. This ranking is due in part to the presence of al-Shabaab, an Islamic extremist group based in Somalia. This group officially joined al-Qaeda as a cell in 2012, and attacks by al-Shabaab against non-Muslims continue to increase throughout East Africa.

Somali people are considered the most homogenous people group in Africa. However, they have the strongest connection to their clan. They are noble people who are fiercely proud of their familial identity. Intense clan loyalty has led to decades of factional fighting, provoked by competing warlords. These divisions and loyalties make national unity difficult.

Great efforts have been made to reach Somalia with the good news of Jesus. Today, a few Somali dialect Bible translations are in progress. Gospel radio broadcasts are gaining broader audiences, especially following recent infrastructure improvements that allow greater internet access. Doors are opening right now for God's servants to gain access to previously unengaged people groups within Somalia. Could this be God's kairós moment for Somalia?

ASK for...

- Jesus, the Prince of Peace, to establish order over this nation. (1 Peter 2:13-17)
- wisdom, humility and courage for President Mahamoud and Somalia's governmental leaders. (Matthew 20:20-28)
- God to respond to Somalia's cry for peace, justice and life. (Luke 11:5-13) 