

PRAYER LETTER 43



This letter is written by the friends of the **Synod of Evangelical Church of Iran in Diaspora**, as the country faces financial pressure and struggles with the spread of Covid19. We invite our partners and sister churches to pray for the people of Iran, including the Christian communities and churches, as they trust in the Lord's protection and guidance and work hard to remain faithful witnesses in these difficult situations.

General information:

Financial Situation- Iran has been under sanctions for decades, which has impacted the country as a whole and every family and person, individually. During the last 40 years The Iranian currency has been losing its value continuously, and government's efforts to control the situation has failed time and time again. Compared to 10 years ago, Iranian currency has 25 times less value, while the salaries have hardly increased by one fourth of that rate. The signing of the Nuclear Deal created big hopes in the country, but when things did not proceed as expected, the economic situation got worse. Everybody complains about the rise of the prices of the goods, food and housing rent. Spread of the Virus and the lack of social services to support families who have lost jobs is bringing people to their breaking point.

Covid 19- As you can read in the News, currently Iran is one of the Covid 19 hotspots, even with not so accurate reporting of the numbers and limited testing. Like some other places, there was a denial of the situation in the beginning. Finally, when there was the stay at home order, people followed the guidelines in the beginning, but very soon they had to go back to work to be able to care for their family, in many cases without the necessary personal protection equipment. Some are careless and government is not so serious in enforcing the orders. Many are in fear of getting the disease. The health care system is not sufficient, and many do not have the appropriate health insurance. People are anxious and under immense stress.

Hope? - Many are depressed and have almost lost the hope for change in the economic or political situation. The wave of immigration to Western countries stopped about four years ago. Many Armenians started moving to Armenia, but the current financial situation and the Covid19 have stopped that process. At present every person struggles for survival. The stress and anxiety have affected the physical and mental health of community. As a result, the family relationships are suffering too. There are some families who are going through very tough times.

Churches- Churches and church offices stopped their in-person activities in early March. Due to lack of proper internet services, having live and online video services or zoom meetings are impossible. Pastors created chat groups and started recording audio messages, scripture readings and worship songs and sent them to members. In June the churches were reopened and a small group of members attended the services, but this did not last long and they had to close down the in-person worship services again.

Despite the pressure, churches continue their services faithfully and try to care for the spiritual and financial needs of the members.

The situation for the new converts and house churches remain very challenging and dangerous, and we hear about new arrests and imprisonments. Despite the threats, the underground church continues growing in number and faith.

Some leaders of the church who have already left the country, are reorganizing themselves to create an Evangelical Synod in Diaspora (SECID). The goal is to help serve the worldwide Iranian Presbyterians, maintain the unity of the scattered members, groups and congregations in coordination with the partners and international organizations. The vision of SECID is to enable, equip, and encourage the global Iranian Evangelical Presbyterians.

Prayer

Lord God we pray for Iran, this ancient country, with thousands of years of history, with bright days and prosperity and difficult days of pain and suffering. We pray for this country and other middle eastern countries that face serious economic challenges. We pray for their leaders so they may lead with wisdom. We pray for peace and justice in those parts of the world.

We pray for the leaders of the country and other world leaders, who make decisions that impact people's daily life and cause them unnecessary pain. Open the eyes of our leaders to see the pain of the other people and fill them with compassion and care, so they do not care only about their countries and their people's interest. We pray for more compassion in this world.

Lord thank you for the daily blessings. Help us to be thankful as we daily enjoy your abundant blessings and help us remember those who are in need of the many blessings, we take for granted. Lord, help the church leaders inside the country and their partners outside to come up with possibilities and the necessary funds to support families who struggle financially.

We pray for those who are sick and their family members, for the care givers and scientists who work tirelessly to remedy the pain of many. We pray for the families who have experienced different forms of loss, death, health, job, income, connection. Help each one of them in their pain.

We pray for the church leaders, who have the difficult task of caring for the spiritual needs of their people who are under immense pressure. As they preach, teach and speak, give them proper words that comfort their people and alleviate their pain, and give them hope. Give them wisdom as they try to help the families who struggle in their relationships.

We pray for the health of the pastors and their families. The continuous stress and anxiety is impacting their health. It is very difficult to care for the needs of the congregation, without having a support system. Lord remember those who are forced to lead alone. Strengthen them as they serve faithfully and with dedication.

In this difficult situation, help the small Christian community to testify with their lives. Help them continue being faithful witnesses. Help them be good and caring neighbors, as they themselves struggles and are in pain. Help them connect, build bridges and care.

We pray for those church members who are scattered in different parts of the world as refugees. We pray for the SECID* leadership as they work hard to reorganize and serve the individuals, groups and fellowships in diaspora. Give them wisdom as they continue to support and stand for their brothers and sisters inside the country.

* **SECID** stands for the **Synod of the Evangelical Church of Iran in Diaspora**.