

to help them adapt to the changing technological landscape. Recipients include Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Fuller Theological Seminary.

The grants were given through the endowment's Thriving Congregations Initiative and will support "a wide variety of programs that will convene groups of congregations," according to a statement given by the endowment.

The Lilly Endowment hopes the grants "strengthen Christian congregations so they can help people deepen their relationships with God, build strong relationships with each other and contribute to the flourishing of local communities and the world."

First Black Astronaut on Long-Term Mission Brings Bible (5)

Forty-four-year-old astronaut Victor Glover packed his Bible and communion cups for the long journey to the International Space Station recently. "As I prepare to leave the planet . . . it's allowed me to focus, or refocus, on the things that matter most," he said. "God assigned me a few really important things. One, this life . . . But, also, my wife and then the family we have grown here."

Glover joined three other crew members on SpaceX Crew Dragon's capsule Resilience. The group were among the first to travel on a commercially developed space vehicle certified by NASA and the FAA.

With internet access in space, Glover will



also attend virtual services for his Houston-based church, Southeast Church of Christ.

Megachurch Demolished in China, Pastors Detained (6)

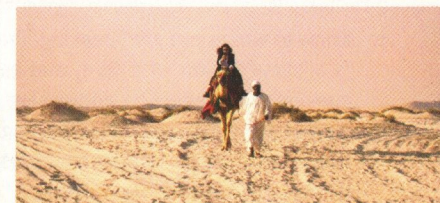
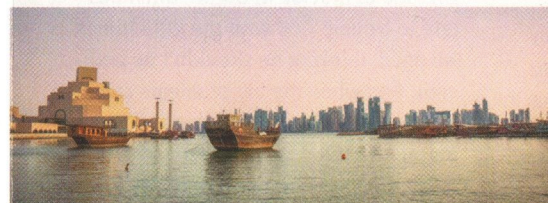
Authorities destroyed a church in China and detained its pastors recently. Officials presented no legal papers ordering the church's demolition but tore it down anyway. The church could seat more than 3,000 people and was part of the country's officially recognized church network. Officials also detained the church's pastors, Geng Yimin and Sun Yongyao, on suspicion of "gathering a crowd to disturb social order."

significant news for christians

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

THE Church Around the WORLD

March 2021



Country in Focus: Qatar (7)

The State of Qatar consists of more than 4,400 square miles on the Arabian Peninsula, the majority of which is desert. Expatriates are drawn from many nations, attracted by the high earning potential, and the expatriate community comprises about 65 percent of the population of 1.7 million. Petroleum makes up 85 percent of the nation's exports. Much of that oil wealth has been used

to diversify the economy, which continues to grow rapidly.

Qatar's Christian communities have been offered land on which to build the first churches in Qatar since Islam's arrival. Qatari believers are a very small minority—most Qataris are Muslim. But Christians are limited by strict anti-proselytism laws. Christians' ability to meet is limited by governmental policy and the high cost and difficulty of renting facilities suitable for hosting larger groups.

Prayer concerns:

- Pray that the large Asian Christian fellowships remain committed to evangelism and discipleship.
- Pray that expatriate Christian groups find suitable places to hold worship services.
- Pray that expatriate Christians will continue to have an impact on those they work with and in Qatar society and culture in general.
- Pray that gospel radio and the Internet can reach Qatari citizens.

New Collective Serves Urban Church Planters (2)

Pastors Thabiti Anyabwile and John Onwuchekwa have started a new initiative called the Crete Collective to minister to Black, Hispanic, and Asian American church planters. A pastor at Anacostia River Church in Washington, DC, Anyabwile said, "The Crete

Collective would place at the center of its work the concerns, ideals, aspirations, frustrations, struggles, and realities of black and brown neighborhoods in all of their diversity."

Though many networks have worked toward equipping minority church planters, many major movements remain "white and suburban and male," according to Len Tang, director of church planting at Fuller

Those who live at the ends of the earth stand in awe of your wonders.
From where the sun rises to where it sets, you inspire shouts of joy.

PSALM 65:8

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This month you can . . . Do These Eight Things for a More Effective Prayer Life

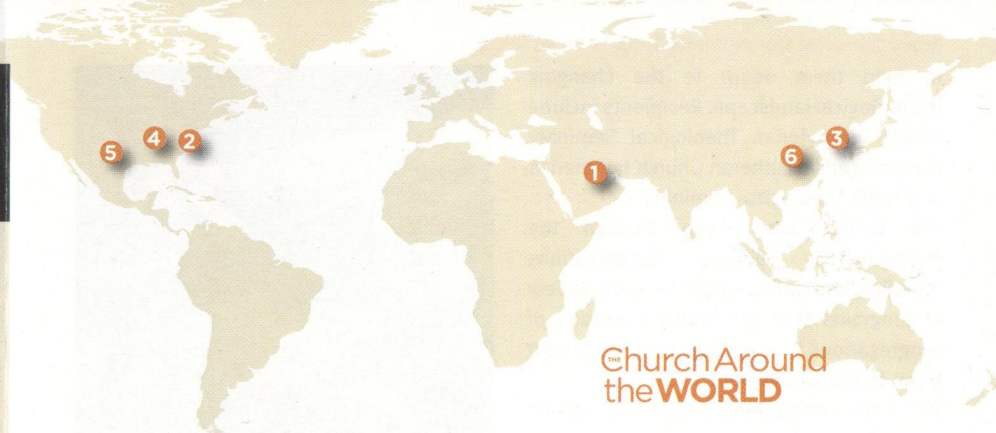
Here are eight keys that will help you develop a more powerful and effective prayer life:

1. Know to whom you are speaking. Prayer is a conversation with God, and every conversation begins by addressing the person to whom you are speaking by name. Jesus begins his instructions on prayer with "Our Father in heaven." He focuses on a distinct person—the heavenly Father with whom he has a personal relationship. We share the same right to call God Father.
2. Thank him. A heartfelt thank-you is always a great conversation starter. Like any parent, God loves to see that we have grateful hearts. But more importantly, as we take the time to praise God for all he has done in the past—the answered prayers, the impossible situations overcome, the healings and grace—our faith to believe for even greater answers to prayer grows stronger and more confident.
3. Ask for God's will. The Lord's Prayer is not the only place where Jesus role-modeled a heart of obedience and submission to the will of God over his own desires and needs. In the garden of Gethsemane, only hours before Jesus' crucifixion, he would once again pray, "not my will, but yours be done." In a world where right and wrong are frequently confused and the future is so uncertain, it can be hard to know how to pray or what to ask for when difficult circumstances arise. But the one thing we can know with absolute certainty is that God's plan for those who love him is good, and the safest place we can be is in the center of his divine will.
4. Say what you need. In Jesus' time, bread was a staple—one of the most basic

needs of life—and he did not hesitate to ask God to provide it. But we often hesitate to trouble God with the little things we need, thinking he shouldn't be bothered. And when the big problems come, we try everything we can to solve them before we think to pray. As James 4:2 tells us, "You don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it."

5. Ask for forgiveness. James 5:16 reminds us that if we want our prayers to be heard, our hearts need to be right with God and with one another. If you feel your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling, take some time to check your heart.
6. Pray with a friend. There is power in agreement when we pray in Jesus' name. When you have an urgent need to take before the throne of God, call a friend to pray with.
7. Pray the Word. The Word of God has power and is our great spiritual weapon. Jesus prayed the Word when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness (see Luke 4:1-12). He was the Son of God, but he did not use his divine authority. Instead, he used the authority of Scripture.
8. Memorize Scripture. The most important key to a vibrant prayer life is to understand our spiritual authority in Christ as explained in Scripture. The only way to do that is to become intimately familiar with the Bible. Even a few minutes a day in the Word of God will add strength and authority to your prayers.

Adapted from an article by Marilee Pierce Dunker. She travels the world as an ambassador for World Vision, the organization her father, Bob Pierce, founded in 1950.



Church Around
the **WORLD**

New Collective Serves Urban Church Planters, continued from page 1

Theological Seminary.

The Crete Collective, named after Paul's command in Titus 1:5, hopes to center its outreach on poor communities. Anyabwile shared that he used to believe many new churches were planted in underprivileged neighborhoods, but he "discovered that a lot of it is happening in gentrified neighborhoods, and redeveloped neighborhoods, and kind of hood-adjacent neighborhoods."

The collective will mobilize other leaders to concentrate in communities "with people who need not just the gospel but good neighbors." Within two years, the Crete Collective hopes to launch six churches in poor urban neighborhoods with high populations of Black, Hispanic, and Asian American residents, as well as strengthen churches currently operating in those areas.

North Korean Defector Decries Regime ⁽³⁾

"I want to live the life I choose," Sookyung Kang said about her choice to defect from North Korea so she could pray without fear of dying. "I chose my dreams and freedom." She also spoke about how she embarked on a 3,000-mile journey to escape North Korea's repressive regime.

"The North Korean government tries to control people by idolizing the leaders," she stated. "I believe the gospel gives

freedom to everyone, but the North Korean regime takes away freedom and won't allow people to think freely."



However, she says this isn't the only problem in the country. According to her, North Korea also doesn't provide for the basic needs of its citizens. Food, shelter, and safety are completely disregarded by the government there, leaving citizens to fend for themselves without giving them the freedom to do so.

North Korea harshly persecutes Christians. In fact, Kang says Christians are the most persecuted group in the country. "Sometimes they are executed or sent to political prison camps," she said.

Indiana Organization Supports Christian Groups ⁽⁴⁾

The Lilly Endowment in Indiana has given out 93 million dollars in grants to 92 different churches and Christian organizations

Continued on page 4