

## **Stirling Free Church 2/05/21**

When joining us by Zoom instead of going directly to the service you will be held in a 'waiting room' until you are let in.

All activities are conducted online via Zoom. If you would like to join us please contact us at [stirlingfreechurch@gmail.com](mailto:stirlingfreechurch@gmail.com)

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May - 11:00 am Rev Iain MacAskill

2<sup>nd</sup> May - 7:00 pm James concluding the series on the Lord's Prayer followed by a time of prayer

### **Midweek Activities**

#### **Ladies Bible Study.**

The Ladies Bible Study will be taking a break over the summer months.

#### **Coffee and Chat each Wednesday at 11:00AM**

Join us for an informal time of fellowship.

### **House Groups**

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 7:30 pm. We continue our series on the Lament Psalms. For more background information on the studies see <https://scottishbiblesociety.org/resources/conversations-lament-psalms/>

#### **Study no 2. Psalm 13**

Questions

1. What jumps off the page at you?
2. How would you summarise the Psalmist's complaint?
3. List the actions the Psalmist wants God to take.
4. List the statements of faith in God the Psalmist makes.
5. What has been your experience of waiting for God?

## **OPEN DOORS**

### **WORLD WATCH LIST:**

Open Doors have asked for prayer for the persecuted church each week, based on their world watch list, taking one country each week.

<https://www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list/>

**The Maldives is in 15<sup>th</sup> place on the World Watch List.**

**How many Christians are there in Maldives?**

There are estimated to be a very small number of Christians in the Maldives. The vast majority of people living there are Muslim.

### **How are Christians persecuted in the Maldives?**

The Maldives – a densely populated chain of nearly 1,200 islands – are viewed by many as a luxury holiday destination, but behind the beauty of this island paradise lies an oppressive regime.

The close-knit, homogeneous community keeps close watch on each other for any sign of deviation – which naturally includes religious choice. All politicians relentlessly claim that they are keeping the Maldives 100 per cent Muslim, effectively leaving no space for any alternative.

Conversion to Christianity can result in harassment, violence or imprisonment. Women could also be forced to marry a Muslim to lure them back to Islam. Vigilante mobs have been known to abduct citizens suspected of being irreligious or non-Muslim.

Expatriate Christians, most of them working in the tourist sector and coming from India and Sri Lanka, are also closely watched, making Christian fellowship very difficult.

### **What's life like for Christians in the Maldives?**

The oppressive regime makes it effectively impossible for Christians to openly express their faith in Jesus. Women and girls, for example, must still abide by traditional dress codes; otherwise they risk dangerously exposing themselves. Remarkably, husbands, wives and children may not even know of each other's faith – such is the dangers it could entail.

Sadly, the new government, inaugurated in November 2018, is showing no signs of hesitation in its determination to keep the islands entirely free from religious influence that's not Islamic.

That said, a speech by President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih in 2019 suggested a determination to work with other countries to root out racism, xenophobia and hate speech. This is good news, given that Maldivians have been taught from a young age to hate Westerners and non-Muslims in general. There is little hint of tangible change yet, but it's a glimmer of hope for us to build prayers from.

### **How can I help Christians in the Maldives?**

Please keep praying for your brothers and sisters in the Maldives. Your gifts and prayers make an enormous difference to those following Jesus no matter the cost.

**Open Doors raises prayer support for believers in the Maldives.**