LEADERS TO WATCH IN 2018
For good or for bad, our political leaders can be powerful forces of change in the world. 2017 saw a number of leaders consolidating power (like Xi Jinping), while others fell from grace (like Robert Mugabe). There was a surprising rise to prominence of new, young faces (like Emmanuel Macron and Mohammad bin Salman), shouldering responsibilities beyond their years. Economics and politics are often inextricably linked, yet despite the world economy rallying in 2017 and signs of an anticipated further improvement in 2018, political uncertainty seems set to continue across the globe in 2018, including in countries that normally enjoy stability and are usually fairly predictable (like Germany, which is facing protracted coalition negotiations).

The dramatically expanded availability and light-speed portability of digital data (especially in the realm of social media) means that it has become increasingly difficult for leaders to hide their poor decisions and indiscretions. This same digital landscape can be both a tool or a weapon, for leaders and their subjects alike. This form of radical transparency, and in some cases disinformation, will most certainly continue to raise the levels of expectation as well as levels of discomfort for leaders this year.

In 2018, leaders around the globe will continue to make far-reaching decisions, often impacting millions of people. This edition looks at 10 leaders to watch in this year, without ranking them according to any criteria. It also does not overlook the fact that there are many others who could play significant roles in their countries, regions of influence or the world: leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, London mayor Sadiq Khan, UK Prime Minister Theresa May and Pope Francis, to mention a few. But it is felt that the 10 who are featured in this edition will have a significant impact in this coming year, especially from a strategic perspective, whether for good or bad.

“Mountaintops inspire leaders, valleys mature them.”
- Sir Winston Churchill
**Donald Trump**

Donald Trump was inaugurated on 20 January 2017 as the 45th president of the United States. One year later, he has set in motion one of the most conservative administrations in US history, and a possible turning point for US Christianity.

Mr Trump, with his uncompromising approach, has redefined global politics and reshaped geo-political relationships. A case in point was his visit to Saudi Arabia in May 2017, where he addressed a group of Arab leaders. He challenged Muslim leaders to step up their efforts to counter a "wicked ideology" and purge the "foot soldiers of evil" from their societies. "This is a battle between good and evil," he said, and further challenged the Muslim leaders: "Barbarism will deliver you no glory – piety to evil will bring you no dignity. If you choose the path of terror, your life will be empty, your life will be brief, and your soul will be condemned."

This speech was in stark contrast to one given by Barack Obama during a visit to Egypt in June 2009, where he opened by quoting from the Quran and went on to describe his own personal experiences with Islam, including having Muslim family members, growing up in Indonesia and having "the call of the azan" shape his convictions. One leader told INcontext afterwards that they liked what Obama said, but they didn’t believe him and didn’t honour him for bringing a “compromised” message.

There is no doubt that Mr Trump will continue his brazen and bold leadership style in 2018. His declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel will not be the last controversial decision of his presidency. But 2018 will likely prove to be a much more difficult political landscape to navigate.

One of the major challenges he will face this year is the mid-term elections that will be held in November. Another challenge will be Mr Trump’s foreign policy and his “America First” platform that has delighted his supporters, but has outraged critics and much of the global establishment. The nuclear threat of North Korea will remain in the news and his relationships with Vladimir Putin, Xi Jingping and Theresa May will continue to be under scrutiny, as well and his approach to Palestine, Iran, the UN and numerous other issues.

**FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

A highly respected mission leader from the US said the following: “We need someone to be a ‘wrecking ball’ to the secular-progressive agenda, the political establishment and political correctness that has run rough-shod over our constitution and our conservative sensibilities. Mr Trump has stepped forward and said that he will be that ‘wrecking ball’. He is not the product of weak people needing a strongman. He is the product of strong-minded men and women who have had enough of their religious liberties taken away by a corrupt and anti-Christian administration.”
On Sunday 18 March, Russians will go to the polls to elect the president of Russia, and if everything goes as planned, Vladimir Putin will win a fourth term, allowing him to stay in power for another six years. Aside from Joseph Stalin, no one would have served longer. With Mr Putin at the helm, the nation has slowly moved towards a unified Russia, the likes of which have not been seen since the old USSR. However, a full realisation of the ‘former glory’ would likely lead to a confrontation with NATO, a war that Mr Putin knows he would not win at this stage. Thus, he plays the ‘long game’ of stirring Russian nationalism in Eastern Europe. His tactics worked in Crimea and East Ukraine, and analysts fear he will attempt the same with the Baltic States; with an approval rating of up to 80%, he is riding the ‘Russian Bear’ in style.

Hosting the FIFA World Cup tournament, one of the most-watched sporting events in the world, is a big foreign policy ‘victory’ for the Putin-led government, and is being used to persuade the people that Russia’s greatness is being reborn on the world stage – all thanks to Mr Putin. Football is huge in Russia, but for those who see Mr Putin as a 21st century tsar, he needs to prove his power by means of military victories on a global stage, such as Crimea. Even Russia’s intervention on the side of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad could be presented as a victory, especially in light of the Soviet Union’s defeat by the United States in Afghanistan in the 80s.

Even though it’s almost certain that Mr Putin will win the election, the future of Russia is set to change dramatically over the next six years as the constitution will prevent him from running again after this election. A succession plan is needed if Mr Putin’s legacy is to continue, and if succession fails, there is the possibility of civil unrest that could dissolve into violence. With more than half the population currently under the age of forty, and growing, a more Western-inclined Russian population (with the youth drawn to the freedoms of the West) is set to test the Kremlin over the next six years. After his re-election, Mr Putin will most certainly attempt to increase his visibility on the world stage.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Under Mr Putin’s reign, there has been an increase in restrictions on non-Orthodox Christians in Russia, which has not gone unnoticed by the international community. With churches being closed and believers imprisoned, the Russia of tomorrow is looking more and more like the Soviet State of yesteryear, and that could prove to be Mr Putin’s downfall. He will have a hard time securing foreign policy victories in the future, while severely repressing believers in his own nation.

By Andrew Richards

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China is moving towards the centre stage of the world, and the man leading it there, with a firm hand, is Xi Jinping, the most powerful Chinese leader since Mao Zedong. Mr Xi is not only leading China in economic terms, but also geopolitically. In his own words: “China will resolutely uphold the authority and status of the United Nations, actively fulfil China’s international obligations and duties, remain firmly committed to China’s pledges to tackle climate change, actively push for the Belt and Road Initiative, and always be a builder of world peace, contributor of global development and keeper of international order.”

Over the past five years, a leadership ‘personality cult’ has formed around Mr Xi – nothing like the ancient emperors who were known as “sons of heaven”, but close enough for him to have risen to absolute power, holding the reigns of the ‘Chinese dragon’, ready to devour the world. The Spectator stated: “New toys such as the Liaoning, China’s first aircraft carrier, have been flashed around the Taiwan Strait, especially during Taiwan’s elections last year. Elsewhere, China has used a persuasive combination of economic reward (meaning access to its market), military threat, and diplomatic pressure to manoeuvre its neighbours and other nations into more convenient, malleable positions.”

China’s international economic rise paved the way for its military to follow, opening its first overseas military base in Africa, and claiming ‘blue water’ navy status by launching its own aircraft carrier and claiming dominance over the South China Seas. But it’s not China’s growing military might that’s changing the future of China – it’s Mr Xi’s ambitious One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, linking China to all of Europe and everything in between.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Having a train run from China to the UK is no small achievement, and it hasn’t gone unnoticed by the Church either: with Chinese foreign development comes Chinese workers, and with Chinese workers comes Chinese Christians who are using China’s rise to spread the Gospel. With Mr Xi’s growing foreign policies, there is the potential for the Church to grow elsewhere in Asia and the Muslim world.
After a dramatic year of missile testing and a ramping-up of the rhetoric between the US and North Korea, with some analysts even speaking of the very real possibility of a catastrophic war, 2018 kicked off on a surprisingly conciliatory note with the first high-level diplomatic talks between the two Koreas in over two years. Although much of the 12-hour meeting was devoted to discussions surrounding the upcoming Winter Olympics in South Korea and the North’s possible attendance, mention was made of the possibility of future military discussions. “North Korea’s weapons are only aimed at the United States, not our brethren, China or Russia,” said Ri Son Gwon, head of North Korea’s delegation at the meeting. But retired South Korean Lieutenant-General I.B. Chun told the Westminster-based think tank Policy Exchange that, while his heart hoped the talks would lead to peace, every indication was that “we have a long way to go”. Chun went on to warn that Pyongyang’s cyber capabilities should also not be underestimated. Australia, Britain and the US have all named North Korea as the culprit behind last year’s global ‘WannaCry’ cyber-attack, which crippled the British health system and infected 300,000 computers across the world.

There are no simple answers or solutions to the North Korean conundrum. What does seem to be apparent in Kim Jong Un’s behaviour is that he is not a madman, but one who is motivated by clear, long-term goals that revolve around ensuring regime survival. Despite military confrontation possibly being closer than ever in 2017, many analysts are of the conviction that the North Korean leader does not seek a war, but does view perpetual confrontation as a key strategy in maintaining his grip on power.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

When it comes to North Korea and its leaders, no inducement has seemed to work. No diplomatic negotiations, nor some of the harshest sanctions of all time, or threats of military action have successfully brought about behavioural change in the North’s leaders. The severe isolation of the nation has continued to ensure an ill-informed populace, lacking the ability (and, in the majority of cases, the motivation) to force a change in leadership. It will possibly take a divine encounter between Kim Jong Un and his Creator to bring about any lasting change – like King Nebuchadnezzar in the Bible, who was confronted, night after night, by a God who sees and knows, who asks questions, who stirs and challenges. Every night when Nebuchadnezzar closed his eyes, he was confronted by holiness, truth, and the terror of the greatness of God. The questions asked were ones he couldn’t answer, precisely because God was asking them. He was driven to seek answers, and when those he usually turned to were unable to assist him, it was a Godly man, Daniel, who pointed him in the right direction. May there be such a ‘Daniel’ should Kim Jong Un be confronted in a similar manner.
Ever since Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was appointed Iran’s Supreme Leader in 1989, there has been a power struggle in Iran between two groups: moderates and reformists on one side (liberals who want to open Iran’s political system and make Iran a ‘normal’, non-revolutionary state), and those who want to keep Iran in a permanent revolutionary state, preserving its theocracy and opposing rapprochement with the West, on the other. Recent developments, however, indicate that 2018 could be a critical year for the Ayatollah (who is also said to have terminal cancer).

In December 2017, street protests broke out in smaller, provincial Iranian towns, rapidly spreading to the capital, Tehran, and ultimately to more than 80 cities nationwide. They apparently began over economic concerns, but later broadened into a general critique of Iran’s clerical establishment. Officially, 21 people died and 1,000 were arrested, although a parliament member from Tehran, Mahmoud Sadeghi, said that as many as 3,700 protesters were arrested. The uprisings have since died down, following a crackdown and the imposition of severe restrictions on social media. Mr Khamenei has lashed out at Iran’s ‘enemies’ in the West, admitting that the recent protests had hurt Iran’s establishment, and threatened the United States, in particular, with revenge.

On 8 January 2018, as the protests were dying down, a video of the Ayatollah’s election in 1989 was leaked. The footage of the secret session reveals that Mr Khamenei was only given a caretaker role as Supreme Leader for a one-year period. He is also shown saying he was not qualified for the position and that his selection was unconstitutional. The video not only raises questions about Mr Khamenei’s rise to the most powerful seat in the country, but also his current leadership.

**FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE**

While the protests in Iran garnered much publicity across the globe, many have struggled to put a finger on the causes thereof – whether they are rooted in pure economics, political rivalry or a combination of factors. An aspect that most of the secular media has overlooked, however, is the growing number of Christian conversions in this Muslim-majority nation. A high profile Islamic seminary official, Ayatollah Alavi Boroujerdi, has reportedly stated: "Accurate reports indicate that the youth are becoming Christians in Qom [one of the most Islamic cities in Iran] and attending house churches." Iranian converts, Christian leaders and missiologists are all saying the same thing: “Iranian Muslims are converting to Christianity at an unprecedented pace.” This reported growth is happening despite tremendous persecution and opposition from the government.

The outcome of the protests remains to be seen. Will they lead to more freedoms, or to even worse repressions? And as the number of conversions continues to rise, will the government target churches even more fiercely, or will those who have tasted life as children of God through Jesus Christ act as leaven in Iranian society, inspiring more people to seek freedom from their authoritarian overlords?
I will return Saudi Arabia to moderate Islam”. This potentially faith-changing declaration echoed around the world as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged to destroy extremism and return the kingdom of Saudi Arabia to “moderate Islam”. “We are ... open to the world and all religions... we won’t waste (another) 30 years combating extremist thoughts, we will destroy them now and immediately,” he said.

Prince Mohammed was appointed Crown Prince in June 2017, in a nation that is closely associated with radical Islam. He immediately assumed the positions of Chief of the Royal Court, Minister of State, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence – all at the age of 32, the youngest minister of defence in the world.

Despite his age, Prince Mohammed has made his presence felt in the Islamic community. He is recognised by the 2018 Muslim 500 (a profile of the world’s 500 most influential Muslims) as the 13th most powerful Islamic leader and the 7th most powerful political leader. He has a PhD in International Law and is fluent in Arabic, English and French. He is also one of the youngest billionaires in the world with an estimated net worth of more than $10 billion.

There is no doubt that Prince Mohammed represents a new face of Islam, and his reforms will challenge the conservative views of religious clerics in Saudi Arabia. In his future role as king, which could span for decades, he would immediately become custodian of the two Holy Mosques, controller of the world’s largest oil reserves, head of the world’s largest Da’wa (Islamic ‘missionary’) network and head of a nine-state coalition in the region.

In November 2017, Prince Mohammed initiated the detention of 11 princes and four ministers under the cover of corruption charges. He is also central to the reforms that have resulted in the breaking of an alliance between hard-line clerics. The reforms have tackled societal taboos head-on, such as the recently withdrawn ban on women driving, and scaled-back guardianship laws that restrict women’s roles.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The scale and scope of the recent reforms has been unprecedented in the country’s modern history and concerns remain that a deeply conservative base will oppose what is effectively a “theological revolution”. In the context of global terrorism, radical Islam, Muslim refugees, the great schism between Sunni and Shia Islam and a dramatic implosion of the Islamic faith, Prince Mohammed could be compared to Christian reformer Martin Luther in the 16th century who was the catalyst of the Protestant Reformation. Luther triggered a movement that reformulated certain basic tenets of Christian belief, and in the same way, Prince Mohammed could become one of the most influential figures in the history of Islam.

2018 will be a definitive year, not only for Saudi Arabia, but for the process of reformation within Islam and the clash of theologies. Prince Mohammed will be a key role-player.
Along with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron is one of the key players in shaping a new future for Europe – Mr Macron even more so, since Mrs Merkel has been tied up in lengthy coalition negotiations to form a new government in Germany. Mr Macron burst onto the political scene, almost out of nowhere, very much like US President Donald Trump, shocking the political elite by acting quickly and boldly. This was seen when Mr Macron presented the Chinese Premier, Xi Jinping, with a racehorse during a recent visit to China. According to Mr Macron, the eight-year-old gelding from France’s presidential cavalry corps represented “an unprecedented diplomatic gesture”, and his counterpart agreed. Chinese experts say that Mr Macron’s gift was a reference to the ‘Qianlima’ or “thousand-mile horse”, suggesting that Mr Macron was signalling his desire for a long-lasting relationship with Beijing. Mr Macron also started his China tour in Xi’an, the ancient Silk Road hub, that according to the Chinese delegation meant that Macron was backing the One Belt, One Road initiative.

But what does a visit to China and the gift of a horse tell us about Mr Macron’s plans for Europe? In 2017, he lobbied the European Council to move away from a Europe of nations towards a single nation of Europe. Mr Macron is championing an EU with its own finance minister, own budget, own economic governance, a harmonised tax system, and its own army and border police force. Put simply, Mr Macron wants a unified Europe, strong enough to engage China and the rest of the world. And he’s willing to give away a prized horse to prove it.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

There are two possible strategic outcomes of Mr Macron’s “united Europe”. Firstly, it would present an almost impregnable barrier to Russia, forcing Russian President Vladimir Putin to move his interests elsewhere, perhaps away from Ukraine and focused more on Russia’s role in the Middle East. The downside of this would be a greater Russian presence in the Middle East, which could endanger the lives of Middle Eastern Christians. Secondly, Mr Macron is rapidly surpassing Mrs Merkel to become Europe’s geopolitical leader, and if his “single nation of Europe” dreams become a reality, a new era of European supremacy would be able to challenge not only China’s economy but also the US military. A strong Europe could potentially see a comeback of the ‘golden age’ of missions on the back of European expansion.
BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

Benjamin Netanyahu is the first Israeli prime minister born in Israel after the establishment of the state. He has been elected prime minister of Israel four times, matching the record of the founding prime minister, David Ben-Gurion. If he survives for another full term, he will become Israel’s longest-serving prime minister in 2018. His chances of seeing out the full term took quite a knock in 2017 with a slew of corruption allegations, not only against him, but also members of his family and some associates.

Mr Netanyahu, who is currently in India to meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is also set to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump in the coming weeks. Referring to all the planned meetings, Mr Netanyahu said that "in the coming weeks I will meet with the leaders of three of the four strongest countries in the world." This is a testament to Israel’s diplomatic stature and strength, he said, which flows from the country’s economic and military strength. Despite such engagement on the world stage, however, Mr Netanyahu still finds himself dealing daily with political issues and scandals swirling around him and his family.

One often gets the sense that, whether one loves or hates him, Mr Netanyahu tends to get a raw deal, and that for some reason, he is held to a different (and, in some ways, impossible) standard. But it is difficult to argue with his success. Under his watch, Israel’s macroeconomic numbers have been excellent, while he has maintained a fairly measured and careful security policy that has kept things relatively quiet.

One of the tremendous challenges facing Mr Netanyahu this year, besides his own political survival, will be bridging the deepening political divide in Israel. He will also, most certainly, continue to express his concern over the Iranian nuclear deal. He is convinced that a nuclear Iran is an existential threat to Israel, and one can expect that he will consistently act accordingly, to counter this threat.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Christianity is one of the recognised religions in Israel and is practised by an estimated 169,000 Israeli citizens (about 2% of population, mostly Arab). In Israel, the practice of religion is free. In Mr Netanyahu’s 2017 Christmas greeting, he said: "I’m very proud to be the prime minister of Israel, a country that says, ‘Merry Christmas’ first to its Christian citizens and to our Christian friends around the world. I'm proud that Israel is the country in which Christians not only survive, but they thrive.” He also went on to promise Christians around the world that he would be their guide next Christmas and give them a tour of the country’s holy sites. Later in December, he slammed the Tehran regime for its treatment of Iranian Christians. Referring to Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif’s Twitter Christmas greeting, he noted, “Saying ‘Merry Christmas’ while jailing Christians in your own country is the height of hypocrisy.” He concluded with: “Say a prayer for our Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering at the hands of this cruel Iranian regime. We stand with you, brothers and sisters – the world stands with you.”
Former Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi was sworn into office as president of Egypt on 8 June 2014, and then faced the uphill battle of saving a politically and economically battered Egypt with a weak infrastructure, plummeting currency, and violent insurgency and unrest in Sinai.

Since then, Egypt has enjoyed excellent international relations with members of the Arab League, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the United States. He was the first world leader to call Donald Trump to congratulate him on his election as president. Quite significantly, Mr Sisi has also publicly supported the Assad regime in Syria as well as the people of Israel. In September 2017, he promised the Israeli people "Egypt’s unwavering support".

During 2018, Mr Sisi’s support for Israel could be a determining factor in the Arab world, and his relationship with Mr Trump could prove to be equally important. Egypt remains one of the most strategic nations in the world, and is generally known as the ‘brain of Islam’, with some of the most influential mosques and universities based in Cairo.

Most of Mr Sisi’s attention in 2018 will, however, be focused domestically. Firstly, Egypt will hold a presidential election in late March and he is widely expected to run. Secondly, he will also spend much of his time figuring out how to deal with the new surge of attacks from the Islamic State (IS) in the Sinai. During 2017, 680 Egyptians were killed in 81 terror attacks. There is no doubt that 2018 will see more casualties, and the response from Mr Sisi could be indicative of what to expect, not just for Egypt but for the whole region.

But Mr Sisi’s reach will stretch beyond his political capacity in 2018. He has a strong voice, like Prince Mohammed of Saudi Arabia, calling Muslim leaders to modernise Islam. In a speech delivered at Al-Azhar mosque, he called Islamic teachers to combat extremist ideology, saying: “We need to revolutionise our religion.” He also called for “religious discourse that is in keeping with its times”. In a dramatic fashion, he accused Al-Azhar’s Grand Imam Ahmed El-Tayeb and other clerics of failing to develop Egypt’s religious discourse.

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

With 47% of all Christians in the region (the 22 nations of the Arab world) living in Egypt, it remains a key nation from a Christian perspective. Whatever happens in Egypt will spiral into the Arab world and will influence Muslims globally.

During his reign as president, Mr Sisi was the first Egyptian president ever to attend a Coptic Christmas service. In his brief speech, he said that both of Egypt’s Muslims and Christians were celebrating the occasion, asserting that they are "one entity" in the world's eyes.

In November 2017, in another first for an Egyptian president, he met a delegation of evangelical leaders from the US at the presidential palace in Cairo to talk about a series of issues, including the persecution of Egyptian Christians by Islamic extremists.
From surviving a military coup in 2016 to winning an historic referendum in 2017, Turkish President Erdogan has proven to dictatorial leaders everywhere that it’s still possible to gain absolute power in an age where popular revolutions oust despots. With respect to Turkey’s own region (more Middle Eastern than European), Mr Erdogan has steered the country into a unique position by waiting out the wars in Syria and Iraq. Now that the Islamic State has been defeated, and warring factions in Syria have weakened, Mr Erdogan is able to deal some decisive blows in the region. His New Year’s message implied just that: “Turkey will not be able to secure its future without resolving problems in its region. This leads us to pursue a more active, bold and if necessary more risky foreign policy. Our recent experiences have shown us that one cannot be involved in [negotiations] without being [active] in the field.”

FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

The European Union (EU) has, in no uncertain terms, told Mr Erdogan that Turkey’s bid to become an EU member is, for now, out of the question. In 2016, a deal was reached between the EU and Turkey to help stem the flow of refugees and migrants to Europe, with the idea that the EU may fast-track Turkey’s application. However, with Mr Erdogan’s new aggressive foreign policy – with a possible increase in military involvement in Syria, Iraq and even Iran – there is a very real danger that countless more refugee could go streaming towards Europe. The threat of such a tremendous influx could ‘blackmail’ the EU into giving Turkey the EU membership they desire. Alternatively, millions of refugees could change the face of Europe in less than two decades. That could potentially mean a Muslim Europe, or the opportunity for the conversion of millions of Muslims to Christianity if the European Church recognises the opportunity instead of viewing it as a threat.

“But God told Samuel, ‘Looks aren’t everything. Don’t be impressed with his looks and stature. I’ve already eliminated him. God judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; God looks into the heart’.”
- 1 Samuel 16:7 (The Message)
CONCLUSION

Not all are called to lead, and not all who lead, should. But Daniel 2:21 says, "He changes times and seasons; He removes kings and sets up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding." This verse in Scripture clearly demonstrates that the Lord is intimately involved in the governance of our world; He did not simply set it in motion, just to step back and leave us to our own devices. But, at the same time, He does not say that we have no role to play in those who govern us; we are called to pray for our leaders, as well as to be respectful and obedient. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 includes an amazing blessing: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” We do see examples of countries in the world that are led well, and whose citizens enjoy quiet and peaceful lives. Many such nations are the envy of those who live under repressive or corrupt regimes. A number of these nations are the ‘dream destination’ of refugees and migrants who set out on perilous journeys in their quest for peace, stability and the opportunity to live a quiet life.

We also see examples in the Bible where the Lord blessed His children, even though they lived under a repressive and violent regime, as with the Israelites during their time of slavery in Egypt. There may have been many times when they felt forsaken, but He did not forget them. He had a plan. The Lord also used kings who did not serve or follow Him, to further His plans, as with Cyrus.

The leaders included in this special edition all carry tremendous responsibilities. Most probably do not know God as Saviour or Lord. But all have been created in God’s image, all are precious to Him. Below is a 10-day prayer calendar with a few prayer points for each leader. Join us in taking up our mantle of responsibility and let us pray for them.

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<th>DAY ONE</th>
<th>DAY TWO</th>
<th>DAY THREE</th>
<th>DAY FOUR</th>
<th>DAY FIVE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Donald Trump</td>
<td>Vladimir Putin</td>
<td>Abdel Al-Sisi</td>
<td>Benjamin Netanyahu</td>
<td>Ali Khamenei</td>
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<td>- That he will be open to the counsel of Godly advisors</td>
<td>- That he will encounter the living Christ</td>
<td>- That he will continue to boldly fight extremism</td>
<td>- That he will be able to focus on Israel’s important issues</td>
<td>- That he will be a ‘voice’ like Gamaliel in the Bible—allowing for continued Church growth in Iran</td>
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<td>- That he will be a willing tool in God’s hands</td>
<td>- That he will exercise Godly restraint in dealing with opposition</td>
<td>- That he will protect and extend the rights of all Egyptian citizens</td>
<td>- That the Lord will lead him in Godly wisdom</td>
<td>- That the Lord will reach him in his frailty</td>
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<th>DAY SIX</th>
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<td>Prince Mohammed</td>
<td>Kim Jong Un</td>
<td>Emmanuel Macron</td>
<td>Xi Jinping</td>
<td>Recep Erdogan</td>
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<td>- That his reforms will lead to greater opportunities for the Gospel</td>
<td>- That he will shift his focus to economic growth</td>
<td>- That he will be blessed with Godly wisdom, beyond his years</td>
<td>- That his economic policies will uplift receiving communities</td>
<td>- That the fear he has of his enemies will drive him closer to the Lord</td>
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<td>- That he will have a personal encounter with the Lord</td>
<td>- That he will encounter Jesus, in dreams and visions</td>
<td>- That he will be a blessing to Europe during these challenging times</td>
<td>- That believers in his ‘inner circle’ will offer Godly wisdom</td>
<td>- That ‘dormant seeds’ of the Gospel would come to life in Turkey</td>
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