



Uniting Church in Australia
Synod of Western Australia



Prayers for Myanmar

At its meeting held from Friday 10 to Sunday 12 September 2021, the 45th Synod of WA agreed by consensus to the following proposal:

“That the WA Synod call on all congregations to include prayers in their Sunday worship for the people of Myanmar and for the Christian churches in Myanmar, that they may continue their strong witness to the gospel, and also to ask members to pray for the people of Myanmar in their own devotions.”

Background

Members of Synod asked that information be provided to them so they could raise awareness in their congregations about the current issues in Myanmar and engage meaningfully in their prayers. The following information is provided in response to this.

On 1 February 2021, the Military led a Coup in Myanmar, overturning the democratically elected government of the National League for Democracy and arresting its leaders. Demonstrations against the coup were widespread and suppressed by the military with many deaths of protestors.

For a while Myanmar was front page on our news broadcasts, but in recent months Myanmar has been forgotten as the world’s media has focussed on events in Afghanistan, Haiti and other places. Although no longer in the eye of the world’s media, the situation in Myanmar is now desperate.

COVID is impacting on many people, especially in the cities and many people are dying. It is estimated that about half of the population have COVID. The military have closed down many medical clinics so access to medical services is limited. Some oxygen factories have been closed and the military are strictly controlling the movement of oxygen with checkpoints at many places, so it is very difficult to get oxygen to anyone suffering from COVID. At first no vaccines were available but now China has supplied their vaccine to the military, but many people are refusing to have this vaccine. People are using traditional medicine practices to treat the virus. Due to the lack of medical care and oxygen many people are dying of COVID.

The economy of the country has collapsed. The main export industries, which are mining of jade, ruby and tin, have collapsed and little money is flowing into the country. Banks have collapsed and ATM’s are not working, so there is a huge shortage of currency. Ex pats feel helpless to send financial aid to relatives in Myanmar, because with no banks or ATMs there is no way of getting it to them and we are informed they are fearful of the military.

Democracy leaders, leaders of ethnic minority groups and charity workers are being arrested, tortured and killed. There have been increased military attacks on ethnic minorities. There are still demonstrations by the National League for Democracy, but these are being harshly suppressed. Democracy leaders have declared the country to be in a state of civil war.

The country is in chaos. People are surviving by growing their own food and helping one another. Internet access to Myanmar is very limited and there is no wifi in the country. However, people are still managing to communicate with the outer world via mobile.

The people want United Nations intervention, but as China controls the Security Council this is unlikely to happen. Given the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, countries like USA and European nations will be very reluctant to get involved in Myanmar without UN endorsement.

The Presbytery of WA has a close relationship with the Karen Baptist Church which meets at Ross Memorial Uniting Church. The Karen are one of the minority ethnic groups in Myanmar and have long been the subject of persecution by the military, especially because many of them are Christian. The Christian churches in Myanmar have been very faithful over the years in their worship, witness and service. Many Karen refugees have been settled in Perth and are now part of the Karen Baptist Church. At a recent meeting of the Multicultural Network of the Presbytery of WA, a representative of the Karen Baptist Church shared with the Network what is currently happening in Myanmar and the desperate situation that many people are facing. The Karen Baptist Church is calling on the Uniting Church to pray for the people of Myanmar at this time.

The situation in Myanmar is desperate. These people are crying out to us for help. The Karen are asking us to pray for their nation. That is the least we can do.